GENDER DIFFERENCES IN SIMULTANEOUS POLY DRUG CONSUMPTION AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF ONE UNIVERSITY, KINGSTON, JAMAICA

Presented by: Patrice Whitehorne-Smith, MSc. Clinical Psychology
• Historically substance abuse research has shown a significant gap between male and female substance use and abuse.
• Over the last decade research has been showing a narrowing of that gap
• This narrowing gap is especially noticeable among adolescents and young adults.
INTRODUCTION

• Numerous studies point out that university life tends to be a time of experimentation.
• This results in drug use patterns either beginning or increasing among young people.
• During this time the use of more than one drug is often common.
INTRODUCTION

• There are two distinct types of poly drug use patterns
• Simultaneous poly drug use refers to the ingestion of more than one drug on a single occasion of drug use.
• Concurrent poly drug use refers to ingestion of different drugs on separate occasions.
INTRODUCTION

• Simultaneous poly drug is more serious than concurrent
• It can create a combination or interaction of the effect of both drugs.
• This may result in greater intoxication, increased risk of injury and a heightened risk of lethality than if drugs were taken separately
INTRODUCTION

• The present research focused on students from the medical/health science field
• This population because:
• research has shown that many persons from this field are drug users/abusers.
• Implication for the care of patients if students in this field have already started a drug use/abuse
Method

• Multicentric study involving universities from the countries of Brazil, Colombia, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Jamaica and Nicaragua

• Exploratory in nature

• However the data in this study was taken only from Jamaica.

• Cross-sectional study using survey design.
Method

Inclusion Criteria:

• Focus on 1\textsuperscript{st} and 2\textsuperscript{nd} year undergraduate medical students and students from health related disciplines
Method

• A cluster sampling technique of data collection was used in this study
• Sourced the university’s list of compulsory courses for 1\textsuperscript{st} and 2\textsuperscript{nd} year students for each program in the Medical/Health Sciences.
Method

• Researchers randomly selected one or more compulsory class as necessary to meet the sample size

• The data was collected in lecture settings across compulsory classes in the Medical Sciences faculty
Method

• Questionnaires and informed consent forms were then distributed to students by research assistants and a 15 minute collection time allowed before collecting questionnaires

• Data was analyzed using SPSS and descriptive and inferential statistics performed on key variables
# Results

Table 1- Description of study participants, University of Kingston, Jamaica, 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>80.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>University Major</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Medicine</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>37.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacy</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current year in University</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st year</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>70.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd year</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Study Questionnaire

Total   N=295
Results

• Males reported higher rates of drug use in their lifetime than females (m= 46.6%, f=31.2%)
• This difference was significant (p=0.020)
• Approximately 41% of males and 14% of females reported simultaneous poly drug use in the last 12 months.
• This difference was significant (p=0.009)
Results

- Within the last 30 days 8.6% of males and 1.7% of females reported simultaneous polydrug use.
- This too was a significant difference (p=0.014)
Results

• The drug combination of alcohol and cannabis was most commonly used by both genders (m=6.9%, f=2.5%) followed by alcohol, tobacco and cannabis (m=3.4%, f=1.3%).
Results

• Within the last 30 days 8.6% of males and 1.7% of females reported simultaneous polydrug use.

• This too was a significant difference (p=0.014)

• The drug combination of alcohol and cannabis was most commonly used by both genders followed by alcohol, tobacco and cannabis.
DISCUSSION

• There was a still a significant difference seen between male and female drug use patterns

• However, there were no significant differences seen in drug combinations used by males and females

• It is likely that results may not truly reflect the extent of drug use among population sampled
DISCUSSION

- Female respondents may have underreported drug use behaviour.
- Culturally it is possible that drug use behaviours may still be seen as more acceptable for males than females, especially in the university setting.
Recommendations

• This study was exploratory in nature. It would be important to examine drug use patterns and simultaneous polydrug use throughout a university population.

• Given persons apprehension to speak openly about drugs even on questionnaires other research methodologies should be considered to gather the data.
Thank you!