

Preventing alcohol and narcotic drugs by primary prevention

Abstract at WFAD+EU-conf. by Slim Lidén, founder and secretary-general of SMART

Background

CASA, Columbia University: “teens who smoke are nine times likelier to meet the medical criteria for past year alcohol abuse or dependence and 13 times likelier to meet the medical criteria for abuse and dependence on an illegal drug than teens who don't smoke”.

Other scientists have said

1. There are important *links/connections* between tobacco, alcohol and narcotic drugs. (If you reduce smoking, you will reduce binge drinking and you will reduce narcotic abuse.)
2. The *age of onset* of tobacco and alcohol is decisive for the youngster's future (there are links between early debuts and dependency/harms from tobacco and alcohol as well as to drug testing and to a criminal life).
3. Aim at the *behaviour* – not at easily changing attitudes!

We are “doers”, who work according to this modern scientific research.

Method

The main aim with (NGO) SMART:s work is to prevent or delay the onset of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs. The target group is youth from 10 to 16 years of age (or from 13 to 16).

SMART:s drug prevention is maintained by positive reinforcement and individual contracts with youth in local communities. All pupils in a community are offered to become members in an attractive Smart Club. To join, they chose to sign a contract where they promise not to smoke and/or drink alcohol for a year (at a time). The contract sheet is also signed by a parent, which leads to fruitful talks at home. The positive reinforcement mainly consists of activities and discounts in local shops.

This is called the Contract Concept. SMART represents 31000 young members in Sweden. The method is spreading and has so far reached Finland, Norway, Russia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Denmark and Belarus.

Results

Scientific evaluations:

- Journal of the Swedish Medical Association ‘Läkartidningen’ # 4/2003 on the contract programme in *Habo*: Smoking and taking snuff were cut to half.
- Evaluation from Umea University of “Tobacco Free Duo” published in Journal of Adolescent Health (US): Smoking nearly halved in the whole of *Västerbotten region*.
- Orebro University: Young members (ranging from 38 to 52 % of them) claim that the contract itself has stopped them from starting on tobacco, alcohol and/or narcotics.
- In *Norway* a tobacco project succeeded in a 26% smoking reduction. As a bonus they got a reduction of 47% in use of narcotics. (Evaluation by Bergen University)

Conclusion

Early prevention of tobacco onset is also an efficient way of reducing narcotics.

SMART has a method for this.

And we offer it for free. Supportive advice included. We do it for the kids and their families.

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