According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, 70% of adolescents have experimented with alcohol, while 20% have experimented with prescription drugs before their senior year in high school. In the United States (US), nearly 2,200 youth (12 – 17 years of age) abuse prescription painkillers each day with illegal drug use being the second leading cause of accidental death for this age group. Alcohol and drug abuse has become a nationwide problem. A small rural community in southern Indiana reports that almost 12% of its population use drugs every day. Nationally, approximately three-quarters of public schools offer some form of substance abuse prevention education however, the grade level standards, content, and coverage vary widely. Alarmingly, research suggests most programs fall below recommended guidelines with the majority lacking content areas that are considered evidence-based. A standardized intervention plan, which is designed to gain the attention and trust of youth, is supported by national and global research. Research conducted by the authors supports their hypothesis that current school-based alcohol and drug curriculums are not robust enough to divert risky behavior during adolescence. A descriptive methods research approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data, was used to investigate this theory. Surveys were administered to residents living in two separate transitional homes for people with addiction. Participants in the study (n = 17) revealed valuable information confirming their rationales for substance abuse. Overwhelmingly, all participants agreed that drug education is essential in early childhood education and needs to be available. As substance abuse escalates, so must our efforts to research and understand the problem. The examination of current adolescent drug and alcohol prevention programs is critical to help promote program evaluation and in identifying potential education needs for our youth.

Title:
Increasing Awareness: Does Early Childhood Drug Education Provide Diversion From Using Drugs and/or Alcohol?

Keywords:
Education, Prevention and Substance abuse

References:


Abstract Summary:
In the U.S., nearly 2,200 youth (ages 12 - 17) abuse prescription painkillers each day with illegal drug use being the second leading cause of accidental death for this age group. Research supports school-based education as an intervention to discourage substance abuse however evidence-based content and standardization is lacking.

Content Outline:
Learner Objectives:
1. The learner will be able to correctly identify the second leading cause of accidental death among youth in the United States.
2. The learner will be able to identify at least two essential elements to include in an effective adolescent drug education program

Expanded Content Outline:
- Identify the purpose of the research
  - Increase awareness of the community problem
  - Explore the effect of early childhood education and drug and/or alcohol use
- Background information
  - National statistics
  - Current status of education in public school systems
- Discuss objectives and hypotheses – pursuit of a standardized solution
- Discuss research methods guiding the project
  - Explore sample characteristics
  - Discuss study results
- Conclusion and contribution to nursing science
  - Standardized education can increase knowledge and informed decision-making
  - Elements of an effective adolescent drug education program

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