

Ethical aspects of drug-related monitoring issues: The ongoing debate at the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA)

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The relevance of ethical issues for an information provider in the field of drugs and drug addiction, as it is the case of the EMCDDA, to carry out its activities has been repeatedly pointed out. As such, several of its main partners, as the UNODC or the Council of Europe Pompidou Group, have developed in a recent past concrete initiatives aiming firstly to identify what are the most relevant ethical issues in the field of drug-related information and to establish afterwards ethical frameworks helping decisions-makers, scientists and practitioners to better develop their own activities in their respective fields of activities.

These questions are essential to effectively carry out EMCDDA activities in the field of collection, evaluation, assessment and dissemination of drug information, both in the area of demand and demand reduction and in the one of supply and supply reduction. The EMCDDA amended mandate also requires an ethical basis to better inform its activities in a number of new fields. Among these, one may underline some possible future activities relating, for instance, with non substance based addictions.

The main topics on which the drug related ethical debate has been focused till now are: Vaccination against drug dependence; Quasi-coerced treatment for drug users; Non voluntary drug testing; Medical research; and Epidemiological research.

Within the future development of the EMCDDA activities, the list of topics which could be provisionally identified as having an ethical dimension is extremely vast. An in depth scientific basis on these issues seems then to be essential.

Biography

Ignacio Vázquez Molini (Madrid, 1963) has a Law degree by the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain and completed his Ph.D in Hispanic Philology at the age of 43 years at UNED, Madrid, Spain. He has been a European Union official since 1992. Currently, he is Principal Administrator, being in charge within the EMCDDA Directorate of Diplomatic Relations and Ethical Issues. He is also the EMCDDA Data Protection Officer. He also teaches comparative literature at the Instituto de Estudios Ibéricos e Iberoamericanos, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal. He has published many articles on literature and history and several fiction books.

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To assess prevalence of chronic pain among subjects with alcohol dependence syndrome

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OBJECTIVE: To assess prevalence of chronic pain among subjects with alcohol dependence syndrome. To study the relationship of alcohol use and its effect on pain

METHODOLOGY: Patients attending outpatient services of Center for Addiction Medicine in National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, Bangalore who fulfils the diagnostic criteria for alcohol dependence syndrome had been screened for chronic pain. Patients having chronic pain were interviewed by following instruments- Semi structured proforma to collect details on demography, pain related details and questions on relationship of alcohol and pain, Brief pain inventory and Severity of Alcohol Dependence Questionnaire (SADQ-C). This study was approved by the Institution ethics committee

RESULTS: Chronic pain was prevalent in 18.15 % of subjects with alcohol dependence syndrome with 48.9% of them reporting pain to be of severe intensity. Use of other substances (nicotine, benzodiazepines, opioids and inhalants) were found in 96.3% with nicotine use being most common. Use of alcohol to manage pain in last month was reported by 75% while 61.95% reported pain as a reason to continue to use alcohol. 61.95% expressed desire for effective treatment while only 33.69% were receiving for chronic pain at present.

CONCLUSION: Chronic severe pain was prevalent in alcoholic population attending an outpatient service. Significant number of them were using alcohol for pain relief and reporting it to be reason to continue to use alcohol. Few patients were taking treatment for pain while larger number were willing for effective treatment. Efforts should be made to better address the pain problems in this patient population.

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