

ABSTRACT

Within recent years, drug abuse has become a priority health problem affecting individuals and threatening the social, political and legal institutions of the region. Sadly, children, including those at school are the main victims of the consequences of drug abuse.

A survey was conducted among 200 students, grades 9-11, in 4 New Secondary Schools in the Metropolitan Area of Jamaica. Through a self-administered questionnaire, the study sought information on the lifetime and current prevalence of licit and illicit drugs, students' perception of the ease of obtaining these drugs, the risk involved and their attitude towards drug use.

The findings revealed that there were increases in the lifetime and current prevalence in the use of cannabis, cocaine, crack, tranquilizers (unprescribed), amphetamines, inhalants, psychedelics, opiates, tobacco and alcohol. Students reported increased accessibility to these drugs and less risk involved in drug use, and many reported that they did not disapprove of trying drugs, including cocaine and crack.

The highest prevalence of drug use was with alcohol, followed by tobacco and inhalants, and more males reported drug use than females. These were compared generally to the findings of the NCDA (1987) school survey. The author concluded that drug abuse has increased in this category of students, and made recommendations including, re-evaluation of the drug abuse prevention programmes in schools; strengthening of peer counselling in schools; banning of tobacco and alcohol advertisements, and of smoking in public places and to create a data base on drug abuse for the region.