

≈ ORAL PRESENTATIONS ≈

OP 004

Inhalant Abuse among Adolescents: Understanding the Problem through Community-Based Inhalant Prevention Program in Teluk Kumbar, Penang**A Nur Afni**, L Razak, MT Mohamed Nazri*National Poison Centre, Universiti Sains Malaysia***Abstract**

This paper describes a project undertaken by the National Poison Centre, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) to address inhalant abuse, specifically glue sniffing among adolescents in the Teluk Kumbar community in Penang. The project's main objective is to gain an understanding of the problem through information gathering and to engage the affected community to curb the substance abuse activities. Through various methods such as surveys, field observation, focus group discussions and community informants (villagers, teachers, and others) the project was able to acquire the relevant information from the community. Findings from the assessment include community's perception on glue sniffing, student's knowledge of the substance, attitude and use of inhalants. The community noticed the glue sniffing activities that occurred in the areas, as they were able to spot the areas commonly used for such purposes. However, their own scant knowledge of inhalant abuse impeded their ability to offer help more effectively. Students of the focus-group however, had some basic understanding of the effects of inhalant to certain target organs, in particular the brain. They were aware that inhalant can kill brain cells (53%), cause memory loss and dementia (56%), euphoria and loss of control (64%), brain damage and impair breathing as well as oxygen transportation (66%). Still, most of the students (87%) did not know that inhalant abuse could result in "Sudden Sniffing Death Syndrome" (SSDS) which could happen even on a very first attempt of glue sniffing. Lacking knowledge on the consequences of inhalant abuse and the easy accessibility to the product are contributing factors to the problem. In response to the assessment findings, educational materials to discourage glue sniffing were created for greater awareness and intervention activities. These activities were jointly carried out with the community in the affected area. The program was evaluated using qualitative methods such as informal discussions with schoolteachers, counselors, community and local NGOs.

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Objectives: The project's main objective is to gain an understanding of the problem through information gathering and to engage the affected community to curb the substance abuse activities

Methods: Surveys, field observation, focus group discussions and community informants (villagers, teachers, and others)

Results: Findings from the assessment include community's perception on glue sniffing, student's knowledge of the substance, attitude and use of inhalants. The community noticed the glue sniffing activities that occurred in the areas, as they were able to spot the areas commonly used for such purposes. However, their own scant knowledge of inhalant abuse impeded their ability to offer help more effectively. Students of the focus-group however, had some basic understanding of the effects of inhalant to certain target organs, in particular the brain. They were aware that inhalant can kill brain cells (53%), cause memory loss and dementia (56%), euphoria and loss of control (64%), brain damage and impair breathing as well as oxygen transportation (66%). Still, most of the students (87%) did not know that inhalant abuse could result in "Sudden Sniffing Death Syndrome" (SSDS) which could happen even on a very first attempt of glue sniffing.

Conclusions: In response to the assessment findings, educational materials to discourage glue sniffing were created for greater awareness and intervention activities. These activities were jointly carried out with the community in the affected area. The program was evaluated using qualitative methods such as informal discussions with schoolteachers, counselors, community and local NGOs.
