

Characteristics, nutritional and health status of addicts hospitalized for detoxification

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Objectives: To identify the characteristics, nutritional and health status of drug addicts hospitalized for detoxification in Jeddah Al-Amal Hospital. Also, to assess the detoxification therapy and its impact on the nutritional status **Methods:** All patients admitted to Jeddah Al-Amal hospital from January to June 1996 were examined and followed until the end of the detoxification therapy. **Results:** The majority of drug abusers were between 20 and 34 years and below university education.

Unemployment was a common feature among 57.1% of them. Smoking, alcohol consumption and family history of drug and alcohol intake were important contributing factors. Most addicts (63.6%) used heroin intravenously. Depletion of body fat, muscle protein in addition to depleted visceral protein and depressed immune function were prevalent features. Liver damage was reflected by elevated mean aspartate transaminase. High prevalence of hepatitis C and B infections were detected. Human immunodeficiency virus infection, tuberculosis and gastrointestinal disorders were also reported by some addicts. A significant gain in mean body weight was seen after detoxification therapy and 11.3% of patients experienced symptoms in the form of vomiting, nausea, constipation and loss of appetite. Failure of previous detoxification therapy was reported by 69.1% of patients. **Conclusion:** Drug addiction attacks the nutritional and health status of individuals who become more prone to various infectious diseases and less productive. Extensive education health programs, directed to all population categories, are crucial to prevent and control the spread of drug abuse. More research is recommended to identify the determinants of drug addiction and evaluate the detoxification therapy.