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SOCIAL CONTEXT OF MARIJUANA USE AMONG THE YOUNG POPULATION: CASE OF SERBIA

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Introduction: Global socio-cultural and family context of Serbian society intensifies risks of marijuana use (MU).

Objectives: Prevalence of MU in young population in Serbia and identification of family factors related to increased risk of MU.

Aim: Five indicators were examined: prevalence of MU, age of first MU, MU during one month before survey, motives for MU, family factors of risk for MU.

Method: The study included 2987 participants aged between 16 and 35 years from different parts of Serbia. Collection of data was conducted in April 2007. Participants completed self-administered anonymous questionnaires (modified YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOUR SURVEY) that consisted of sociodemographic characteristics and experiences related to MU.

Results: The prevalence of lifetime MU among participants was 32%. First use was reported by 14% to occur at the age of sixteen or younger. During one month before survey 10% of participants had smoked marijuana. Risk of MU in regular cigarette smokers is two-fold higher than in non-smokers. Key motives for MU are curiosity (59%), achieving "good mood" (12%), persuasion by persons of the same age (11%), the emotional crisis (8,5%).

Alcoholism of both parents and family dysfunctionality - especially physical and verbal conflicts between parents - were related to significantly higher risk of marijuana use.

Conclusion: Early use of marijuana, history of family disorganization, parental alcoholism and conflicts were identified as factors significantly related to increased risk of marijuana use among young population in Serbia.