

Pharmaceutical against drug abuse is increasing in South Asia, especially India - a trend the UN said will increase the risk of diseases like HIV / AIDS and also pose a serious challenge to countries already struggle against the use of drugs.

“Many young people from 18-20 years start using pharmaceuticals. Injection drug in the body is very common in India,” said Ashita Mittal, senior program director at the United Nations Office against Drugs and Crime (South Asia).

“The injection of pharmaceuticals is an escalation in the region. A survey has found that injecting drug users (IDUs) are prone to diseases like HIV / AIDS. Pharmaceutiques against drug abuse is a double bypass and a double epidemic,” Mittal told IANS in an interview.

She said in addition to India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan also are fighting the growing threat of pharmaceuticals abuse. June 26 is the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking.

Pharmaceutical products such as buprenorphine, dextropropoxyphene, diazepam, nitrazepam, based cough syrup codeine, phenergan chlorpheniramine and are generally abuse of pharmaceuticals in India and neighbouring countries.

“The tendency to abuse of pharmaceuticals is more and more that young people believe that buy in pharmacies fight is easier, less expensive and does not have any stigma. There is the perception that, in so doing, they are not breaking the law,” said Mittal.

She said that if there are laws to regulate pharmaceuticals production and sales, “there is a need for increased monitoring of compliance with the law.”

“The production of counterfeit drugs, counterfeit brand products are proving to be a major concern. It is estimated that over 25 per cent of medicines consumed in developing countries are wrong.

“India is a pharmaceutical market booming and we expect drug controllers to monitor the production of fake drugs and selling, without harming the real pharmaceutical manufacturers,” said Mittal.

She said a new study by UNODC with a sample size of 5800 drug users in India has revealed that over 25 per cent are using buprenorphine and 30 percent have injected proxyphene at least once in their career addiction.

The study also revealed that at least 28 per cent of heroin addicts have injected at least once in their lifetime and 62 percent are users of pharmaceuticals.

According to UNODC data, nearly 74000 units tablets of diazepam were drug seizures in Bangladesh last year. Likewise, nearly 95000 units norfin, diazepam and phenalgon were seized from Nepal.

“Although India has no such systematic data, we can say that the situation is much worse in the country and its neighbours. Abuse of the pharmaceutical industry in India is a serious and disturbing problem for the country and the UNODC,” she added.

Most injecting drug users using the same syringes and needles used by their colleagues drugs. In northeastern states, at least 78 percent of injecting drug users sharing needles. Twenty-eight percent of 4000 IDUs interviewed failure to clean injecting equipment before sharing.

“This increases the spread of HIV / AIDS. And it is no longer confined to urban areas, small towns of Punjab and Haryana have started to tackle the problem together,” said Mittal.

She said women are too resort to the abuse of pharmaceutical drugs. While almost 16 per cent are women using sleeping pills, more than 18 percent are using propoxyphene.

She said to control the problem, “we need a national awareness campaign, strict vigilance and participation of the community”