FACT AND FICTION:

Drugs: Collateral Damage

Drug users will often rationalize (i.e. excuse) drug use by labeling use a personal choice which only affects themselves. This reasoning could not be further from the truth. Drug use hurts everyone around the user, from the farmer forced into working for an illegal drug organization to the average person walking down the street. We all are victims of the violence, crime, cost, and loss that stems from drug use.

1. Heroin
2. Cocaine
3. Barbiturates
4. Street Methadone
5. Alcohol
6. Ketamine
7. Benzodiazepines
8. Amphetamines
9. Tobacco
10. Buprenorphine
11. Cannabis
12. Solvents
13. 4-MTA
14. LSD
15. Methylphenidate
16. Anabolic steroids
17. GHB
18. Ecstasy
19. Alkyl nitrates
20. Khat

When we look at drugs this way, we see that drug use not only harms individual users but causes damage to the entire community. To take this into account, British researchers conducted a study to determine the harmfulness of 20 individual substances by rating physical harm, risk of dependency, and social costs of each individually on a scale of 0-3. The table below shows the total score for each substance, giving a maximum score of 9 for each substance.

Bar chart values: 8.32, 6.89, 6.24, 5.81, 5.54, 5.23, 5.11, 4.98, 4.87, 4.73, 3.81, 3.80, 3.68, 3.54, 3.46, 3.35, 3.27, 2.77, 2.39

Harmfulness Rating

Source: Advisory Council for the Misuse of Drugs.

BARBITURATES

Addiction Rank: 4th

Harmfulness: 3rd

Description: Any of a group of barbituric acid derivatives that act as central nervous system depressants and are used as sedatives or hypnotics.

Side Effects: Coma and death are common after overdose, especially when accompanied by alcohol; drowsiness, dizziness, shaky movements, depression of breathing, headache, paradoxical excitement, and confusion.

CANNABIS

Addiction Rank: 11th

Harmfulness: 10th

Description: A tall annual dioecious plant (Cannabis sativa), native to central Asia. Also known as Marijuana.

Side Effects: Increased pulse and heart rate, bloodshot eyes, dilated pupils, increased appetite, impaired coordination and concentration, anxiousness, panic, self-consciousness and paranoid thoughts.