

# KICK YOUR HABIT

## Concept Note

SANCA National Directorate

### Introduction

The South African National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (SANCA) is a non-profit organisation that is committed to the treatment, prevention and awareness of drug dependence within all nine provinces of South Africa. With more than 60 years' experience in this field, it is one of the leading organisations fighting the ever increasing substance use and abuse rates within the country. With 30 clinics and 98 service points throughout the country, SANCA is also one of the biggest non-profit organisations in South Africa, with all of its branches affiliated to the SANCA National Directorate based in Johannesburg, Gauteng.

### Purpose

Substance dependency statistics show that drug consumption (cannabis, cocaine, and Tik) in South Africa is twice the global average and second to none in Africa (UN World Drug Report, 2014). The average age of drug dependency in South Africa is 12 years and decreasing. South Africa is among the top 10 narcotics and alcohol abusers in the world. For every 100 people, 15 have a drug problem and for every 100 Rands in circulation, 25 Rands are linked to the substance abuse problem (Christian Addiction Support, 2016). Drug and Alcohol dependency is destabilising the fabric of South African society and is often linked to other social ills (such as violent crime, gender-based violence, child abuse, and the ever increasing HIV/AIDS incidence rates). As of 2017, it is reported that South Africa has the highest prevalence of Foeatal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder (FASD) in the world, with a prevalence rate which is 14 times more than the global average. The South African youth are particularly vulnerable to the experimentation and long-term use of substances (whether it be alcohol, illicit drugs, or even over-the-counter and prescription medication). The cost to the country is measured not merely in Rands, but also in loss of creativity, innovation, artistry, talent, to name a few.

Dr Paul Seale, Mercer University School of Medicine, USA, researched drug use in South Africa and found that 13.3% of the South African population had used drugs during their lifetime, resulting in substance abuse in 3.9% of people and dependence in 0.6% of the population. There were high levels of inhalant use among youth, he said. Cannabis (dagga) was the drug of choice among those undergoing substance abuse treatment, and methamphetamine (tik) abuse was common in the Western Cape and Eastern Cape. There was also a noticeable increase in the use of over-the-counter and prescription medicines, especially by young people, which includes the highest use of methaqualone (mandrax/Quaalude) in the world.

As endemic as the problem of substance abuse within the country is, many South Africans know very little about the problem and how it might be affecting them personally. Secondly, many people are unaware of the difficulties faced by substance dependents when first entering treatment and the long-term fight that will be faced over the years after treatment. The prohibition of the sale of alcohol during levels 5 and 4 of the lock down during the Covid-19 Pandemic further reinforced that South Africans have a problematic relationship with alcohol use. The desperation was seen in the making of home brew concoctions, illegal trade in alcohol and robberies of liquor stores. Families that were now isolated could now experience the impact of addiction. The lifting of the ban further during level 3 of lock down raised concerns about the increase in crime and gender-based violence.

Years of believing that the addict has a choice every time they use has led to the idea that active addiction is fuelled by the irrational and selfish behaviours of the individual themselves. However, addiction is far more complex than this simple explanation. The drive to continue using is more often fuelled by the psychological and physical needs of the dependent individual and treatment is often more complex than just stopping.



**SANCA NATIONAL**



**22<sup>nd</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> June 2020**

### **KICK your HABIT campaign**

The purpose of the 'KICK your HABIT' campaign is to raise awareness of the complexities related to addiction and dependence. The campaign seeks to build awareness through experience; by challenging individuals within our communities and country to stop using one 'thing' for a week and experience, albeit briefly, what a substance dependent might go through in treatment. With experience comes education and this is the ultimate aim of the campaign. Whether this 'thing' is caffeine, tobacco, chocolate, or even shopping, is entirely up to the individual's discretion; however, it is important to consider your choice and select the habit that you can identify using on regular basis.

Keeping a daily log, or even an on-line blog of your progress is encouraged, as this will create awareness for the difficulties faced by dependents on a daily basis. Whether this daily log is posted online, or is private is your decision, as long as you engage with the challenge.

SANCA is asking all South Africans to join the challenge and to challenge each other during the week.

By raising awareness of the difficulties related to substance use and abuse we take a step closer to lowering the incidence and rates of substance use within our country. It is our responsibility as citizens of this country to work together to build a brighter future for the next generation.

### **For more information, please contact:**

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