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COUNTERMEASURES FOR DRUG ABUSE IN JAPAN

by

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Note: The views expressed by the author, the selection of facts presented and the opinions stated with regard to the facts are the responsibility of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of Unesco.
The history of drug abuse in Japan has been greatly changed periodically as follows.

The first stage was from 1945 to 1954, which was the awakening drug (Stimulant) period just after World War II.

Awakening drugs had been used for relief of fatigue and increase of efficiency in the military forces and factories at the end of the World War II.

After the War, a large quantity of awakening drugs which had been stored by the military authorities began to flow into the market due to the social confusion and were misused by novelists, entertainers, prostitutes and juvenile delinquents. Consequently, since 1949, the abuse of awakening drugs has attracted public attention as a health problem as well as a cause for social evil.

Mass media such as press and radio began an active campaign against awakening drug evils.

Under these circumstances, the Government started to draw up a draft law for controlling awakening drugs. In 1951, the Awakening Drug Control Law was enacted for the purpose of suppression of the evils of the drugs. In addition, the Headquarters for Promoting Countermeasures against Problems of Awakening Drugs was established in Jan. 1955 in accordance with the Cabinet decision to co-ordinate the functions of governmental agencies concerned. Thus, nation-wide enlightenment activities concerning awakening drugs were launched by the headquarters.

As the result of the intensified control and the measures mentioned above throughout the country, the number of violations of the Law decreased gradually year after year from the peak of 53,000 cases in 1954.

The second stage was from 1955 to 1963, that was the serious heroin period. The Criminal areas of the large cities teamed with heroin addicts, and the organized illicit traffic groups of heroin became very active. The problem of heroin became a major social problem. On the other hand the mass media carried out the campaign against heroin in order to make the people aware of the facts relating to heroin abuse.

In view of the critical situation, the Government, aiming at the promotion of comprehensive and effective countermeasures for the narcotic problem, has established "the Minister's Council for Narcotic Control ", and as its lower part of organization, "the Headquarters for Promotion of Narcotic Countermeasures ". As one of the measures against narcotic problem, effective enlightenment activities have been conducted on a nation-wide scale for the purpose of informing people of real narcotic evils. Furthermore, the Narcotic Control Law was largely amended in June 1962.

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Accordingly, since 1964, the number of heroin offences and addicts has sharply decreased through the above efforts, and the grave situation of heroin abuse has turned to a good direction.

The enlightenment activities against narcotics and awakening drug abuse in Japan have been carried on by the Headquarters as follows:

- The principal purposes of the activities are:
  - 1) to inform the public as to the danger of drug abuse,
  - 2) to provide treatment and rehabilitation for addicts, and
  - 3) to improve bad social environment.

- Also, the enlightenment activities have been developed by the following means, that is:
  - 1) publicity activities concerning drug problem with the co-operation of mass media,
  - 2) enlightenment activities by administrative agencies concerned through their respective information channels, and
  - 3) intensified regional activities under the co-operation of administrative agencies concerned and voluntary organizations by establishing "the Local Headquarters for Promotion of Narcotic and Awakening drug Counter-measures" as a centre of activities in adequate areas.

- The concrete details of the enlightenment activities were as follows:

  1) to the general public,
   - prepared and distributed posters, leaflets and stickers
   - displayed posters and photographs
   - used films and slides
   - gave public lectures
   - alerted the mass media (newspaper, magazine, radio, TV, etc.)
   and provided them with materials about drug abuse.

  2) to young people,
   - distributed leaflets
   - displayed posters
   - used films and slides
   - explained treatment and rehabilitation of addicts.

Also, placed major emphasis on the following activities.
- alerted schools, welfare offices for youth, and institutes of correction and rehabilitation
- helped voluntary activities of PTA
- provided schools with information
- distributed pamphlets for educators
- alerted youth groups, boy's clubs, etc.
3) to places of business and factories,
   - alerted business proprietors, labor union leaders
     and health administrators
   - examined laborer health
   - prepared and distributed leaflets, posters, and
     pamphlets
   - used films and slides
   - gave public lectures
   - explained treatment and rehabilitation of addicts
   - alerted the Labor Standard Inspection Offices, and
     Health Center Offices

4) to businessmen affecting public morals,
   - alerted voluntary organizations
   - alerted employees as a part of health education
   - used films and slides
   - gave public lectures
   - explained treatment and rehabilitation of addicts

5) to dwellers in delinquent quarters
   - alerted dwellers in the model towns
   - distributed pamphlets and leaflets
   - displayed posters
   - used films and slides
   - gave public lectures

Nowadays, Japan is known to be a country with a highly
effective control system of drug abuse as shown in Fig. 1 and 2.
The principal features of the successful control of awakening drugs
(1945-1954) and heroin (1955-1963) epidemics are as follows:

1) effective enlightenment activities
2) intensification of control system against drug abuse
3) strengthening heavy penalties against narcotic crimes
4) control of the domestic organized groups
5) strengthening the law enforcement services
6) establishing the system of compulsory hospitalization
    for addicts
7) establishing the counselor system for addicts

Above all, it is not too much to say that enlightenment
activities have played a big role in preventing drug abuse.

In the light of Japanese experiences, it should be empha-
sized that the enlightenment activity on the danger of drug abuse
to the public is one of the most important measures to combat drug
abuse.

In this regard, mass media have the social functions to
provide factual and accurate information about drug abuse problems,
and to stir up public opinion against the danger of drug abuse. There-
fore, mass media cooperation should be essential for a successful
programme of drug abuse eradication.