**Substance abuse in Iraq, Quantifying the Picture**

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**Summary**

# Background: Substance abuse is a worldwide problem that faces governments, including health ones. In Iraq, the problem is relatively recent and it seems that it is growing very fast. This has motivated all the relevant parties in the Iraqi community, officially and non-officially, to raise voices and conduct tasks to try to control the problem through primordial prevention (via mass education), primary (via taking measures to reduce drug smuggling), secondary (via treating the abusers), and tertiary (via rehabilitating the recovered abusers). Aim: This study was conducted, as a part of the efforts above, to try to scientifically quantify the problem in the country. Method: The researchers reviewed the available data of the Iraqi Community Epidemiological Workgroup for the years 2016 to 2021. Mainly, the data were extracted from health and judicial authorities' records. Results: It was very clear that the numbers of victims of substance abuse have been increasing, when the patients treated by the health institutions increased steadily from 2979 in 2017 to 6101 in 2021; and the numbers of persons who appeared in front of a judge in the Iraqi courts more than doubled from 6393 persons to 14391 persons during the same period. More than half of the burden (50.1%) had been put on the health institutions in Baghdad. Generally, the highest addiction substance abused by the treated patients were alcohol (37.8%) and medication (22.6%); hence, the most frequent court cases were those of substance abuse (65.7%) rather than substance smuggling. Some Iraqi governorates showed an increase in their share of abuser patients treated during the study period, like Al-Muthanna, and Thi-Qar. During the study period, there has been a marked increase in the number of patients treated because of amphetamines abuse and marked decrease in opioids abuse. Regarding sex, the number of abuser female patients is much less during the study period and minors were less than adults.

**Key words:** Substance abuse, Addiction, Iraq, Situational analysis