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THE KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES, PRACTICES AND PREVALENCE OF ALCOHOL AND CANNABIS USE AMONGST SOUTH AFRICAN DIAMOND MINERS

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A Research Report submitted to the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Public Health

Johannesburg 2005

DECLARATION

I, VICTOR NNANNA ONWUKWE declare that this report is my own work. It is being submitted for the Degree of Master of Public Health in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at this or any other University.

_____

_____ day of _____ , 2005

DEDICATION

To Emman Eke Kalu for giving me the avenue to pursue a lifelong dream.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The course work and the research aspect of the Masters in Public Health programme was a wonderfully transformative and yet sometimes a very difficult experience for me. A number of people played pivotal roles in making sure that I completed this undertaking.

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VICTOR NNANNA ONWUKWE.

ABSTRACT

The causative association between alcohol, cannabis use and accidents in the workplace have been shown in some studies. The adverse effects of these on employee's health, work performance, public and industrial safety have also been researched internationally.

But there still remains a paucity of information on the knowledge, attitudes, practices and prevalence of alcohol and cannabis use on diamond mines in South Africa even though anecdotal evidence suggests widespread use that is on the rise.

As a result of this, effective intervention strategies to stem the rise have not been developed.

This study assessed the knowledge, attitudes, practices and prevalence of alcohol and cannabis use amongst South African diamond miners.

It was a cross-sectional analytical study which ascertained the knowledge, attitudes and practices of the miners in relation to alcohol and cannabis use through face to face structured interviews. The prevalence of alcohol was ascertained through breathalyser testing and that of cannabis through urine tests. The study site was a large diamond mine located in the northern part of South Africa.

Individual written informed consent was obtained from each of the participants before questionnaire interviews, breathalyser and urine tests were carried out.

All the interviews and tests were anonymous and unlinked. None of the test methods were invasive. The questionnaire was tested in a pilot survey.

This research was commissioned by the Safety in Mines Research and Advisory Committee (SIMRAC).

The reported prevalence for alcohol was 44% whilst the tested prevalence was 1.4%.For cannabis, the reported prevalence was 2.0% whilst the tested prevalence was 2.8%.The significant factors associated with alcohol use were higher educational qualification and type of work. Full time employees were more likely to have ever used alcohol. Reported users of alcohol and cannabis started before starting work on the mines. An overwhelming majority of the participants reported that alcohol and cannabis use could lead to accidents on the mines. A large majority reported that intervention strategies such as education, regular testing of employees and entertainment will decrease the use of alcohol and cannabis.

Possible explanations for the patterns observed in the use of these substances have been given and suggestions on how to influence the use of these substances have been made.

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