

Drug addiction in Qatar: rehabilitation/intervention practices

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Introduction

Qatar is a signatory to the United Nations Single Convention on Narcotic drugs and the Convention on Psychotropic Substances, and the Convention Against Illicit Trafficking Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. These international instruments prompted the enactment of law No 9 of 1987 on Control and Regulation of Narcotic Drugs and Dangerous Psychotropic Substances in Qatar. Since, the dominant response to managing drug problems were located within the criminal justice system. The State of Qatar, which is situated in the west coast of the Persian Gulf is home to 2.7 million inhabitants. The statistics of the World Health Organization 2018 indicate that the prevalence of tobacco use among people aged 15 years and older in the State of Qatar is (14.0 %). The total per capita consumption of alcohol at the age of (15 years) in 2019 is about 1.5 liters of pure alcohol.

According to the latest WHO¹ data published in 2018 Drug Use Deaths in Qatar reached 12 or 0.33% of total deaths. The age adjusted Death Rate is 0.73 per 100,000 of population ranks Qatar 131 in the world. There has been an increasing recognition of using treatment models to manage substance use disorders rather than punitive models internationally and locally. Recently, there has been a shift to recognize drug use as a major public health issue and Qatar has moved away from treating drug addiction merely as a criminal matter and is recognizing it as a health and social challenge and a human rights issue.

In Qatar, addiction treatment has been linked to government efforts by launching the National Drug Control Strategy in Qatar (2010-2015) aims to strengthen the role of the various governmental institutions working to deal with drug abuse, and the Drug Prevention Department in the Ministry of Interior combats drug crimes, including smuggling, promotion, possession, and cross-border crimes. Drug-control has been included as an outcome in the Qatar Second National Development Strategy published in 2018. The Fourth Human Development Report of Qatar (2015) indicates that the Council's Treatment and Rehabilitation Center works closely with the Ministry of Interior and provides services to inpatients (its capacity is 28 beds, with a plan to increase the number to 125 beds). The center has more than 100 employees from various specialties.

Rehabilitation services for drug addicts in Qatar

- Referrals Services: The Social Rehabilitation Center established by Law No 21 of 2006, which works closely with the Ministry of Interior, commenced receiving referrals to help and support people with substance use problems in 2009.
- In-patient and Out-patient services: the Supreme Council of Health's (currently known as the Ministry of Public Health) worked closely with the Ministry of Interior and provided in-patient and out-patient services for people with substance use disorders.

- Receive Telephone calls Unit: the Ministry of Interior's Drug Enforcement Department who established a unit to receive telephone calls from families and parents of people who use drugs.

Naufar center

- It is a five-star medical facility built with the latest medical equipment, and includes 127 residential rooms for the treatment of drug addicts
- Providing in-patient, out-patient and residential services for people with substance use disorders.
- One of the objectives of the Naufar Center decision is 'to work on improving the image of the addict as being a patient who needs assistance and care.

Center services

- Preparing and implementing subsequent follow-up programs for the recovered, integrating them into society, and securing job and education opportunities for them
- Holding scientific conferences and symposia in all fields and disciplines related to addiction issues and its treatment.
- Establishing activities and events and issuing educational and awareness materials aimed at enlightening and educating the community on issues of addiction.
- Conducting clinical research and scientific studies related to treatment, rehabilitation, and prevention programs.
- Qualifying national leaders specialized in the treatment and rehabilitation of addicts through educational and training programs organized by the center in cooperation with educational institutions, in coordination with the competent authorities in the country.

¹https://www.who.int/health-topics/alcohol#tab=tab_1

Challenges

- I. There is not enough local data on the number of addicts in Qatar or the services provided for the treatment of addicts.
- II. Limited local evidence on the effectiveness of services currently being delivered to substance users in Qatar has created a vacuum where some stakeholders have challenged existing treatment models and interventions, including their suitability and cultural appropriateness.
- III. Lack of integration of healthcare systems and treatment programs for people with substance use disorders, leads to patients falling through gaps and missing out on cost effective care.

Acknowledgments

None.

Conflicts of interest

None.