

The Effectiveness of the School-based Unplugged Primary Prevention Programme on Cannabis Use



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BACKGROUND: The study was carried out as a randomised trial featuring an evaluation of the effect of the school-based Unplugged prevention programme developed as part of the EU-Dap-2 project. The Unplugged intervention consists of a total of 12 lessons delivered within one academic year and is based on the Comprehensive Social Influence Model. **AIMS:** To ascertain whether the Unplugged programme has an impact on cannabis use, by means of the lifetime and 30-day prevalence indicators. To verify the duration of the programme's measurable effect over time using retests. **SAMPLE:** A total of 1,874 pupils in the sixth grade of "basic school" (which is attended by pupils aged 6-15) participated in the study; the average age at the beginning of the intervention was 11.82 years. **METHODS:** The pretest of the randomised trial was conducted several days prior to the commencement of the intervention in the sixth grade of basic school. The first retest was carried out immediately after the completion of the last lesson and another four retests followed, 3, 12, 15, and 24 months after the intervention, respectively (altogether, five retests were performed). Data were collected using the

ESPAD questionnaire complemented with a substance use-related knowledge test. The prevalence rates of tobacco use were also looked for in terms of statistically significant differences between the groups. **RESULTS:** Statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups (as regards any positive effect of the intervention on the experimental group) could be observed as early as the beginning of the academic year following the completion of the intervention (September 2008). In comparison to the pretest (September 2007), the experimental group showed a negative development in the 30-day prevalence indicator from 1.0% to 1.3%. In the control group, on the other hand, the level of experience with cannabis in the past 30 days increased from 0.4% to 4.4% ($p = 0.01$) during the study period. The duration of the positive effect of the intervention over time is demonstrated by the statistically significant differences in the level of smoking cannabis two years after the completion of the programme ($p = 0.05$). **CONCLUSIONS:** The implementation of Unplugged resulted in a statistically significant measurable positive effect on Czech children in terms of regular cannabis use.

KEY WORDS: EVALUATION – PRIMARY PREVENTION – RISK BEHAVIOUR – CANNABIS USE

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