

Addictive Substance Use as a Social Determinant of Health in Selected Romani Families



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BACKGROUND: The article presents a qualitative evaluation of the occurrence and effects of certain types of addictive substances (both legal, such as nicotine and alcohol, and illegal, such as marijuana and other drugs) in the everyday life of selected Romani communities, with a focus on the assumed impact of such determinants on their health status. **AIMS:** Addictive substances on a study sample in the wider context of the respondents' everyday life.

DESIGN AND MEASUREMENT: A qualitative method of data collection - socio-ethnographic field research - was used. Other techniques included participant observation and interviews. The data collected were recorded in the form of written field notes and subsequently evaluated by means of content analysis. **PARTICIPANTS:** The target sample comprised five selected Romani families from two locations. The families differed in terms of their social strati-

fication. **RESULTS:** Addiction to nicotine predominated in the study sample. Tobacco smoking even occurs among young people from the age of 12 and continues among pregnant women. Smoking poses a financial burden, which, however, is not a motivation for abstinence. While the regular drinking of alcohol was only sporadic among the individuals included in the sample, the abuse of illicit drugs among the young generation of Roma is on the rise; marijuana is not even considered a "real" drug by the community. **CONCLUSIONS:** The use of addictive substances has a connection not only with the socio-economic situation, but also with the attitudes of the family and/or the community to this issue. The users are tolerated a great deal, which is obvious in the toleration showed for smoking among very young children. Members of the extended family are also the most likely initiators of drug abuse.

KEY WORDS: ROMANI PEOPLE –SOCIAL HEALTH DETERMINANTS – ADDICTIONS

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