

Drug Addiction in Punjab in Common Called UDTA Punjab- A Serious Case of India

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ABSTRACT: Drug abuse is a global phenomenon, affecting almost every country, but its extent and characteristics differ from region to region. India too is caught in this vicious circle of drug abuse, and the numbers of drug addicts are increasing day by day. The bane of drug abuse in Punjab has acquired the proportions of a pestilence that has shaken the entire society in the state. It is observed that in Punjab “drug abuse” is a raging epidemic, especially among the young. The problem of drug abuse in youth of Punjab is a matter of serious concern as every third person is hooked to drugs other than alcohol and tobacco. The other striking observations are the high prevalence of heroin and intravenous drug abuse. The common nickname Udda Punjab hence implemented with and shown in Bollywood movie too.

KEYWORDS: Punjab, drugs, youth, heroin, society, addicts, raging epidemic, alcohol, tobacco

I. INTRODUCTION

To do a reality check, we went to the Tibba Basti area of Zira town in Ferozepur. We met the family of Sukhchain Singh, 28, who died of a drug overdose. He worked as a painter and became a drug addict two years back. "We tried our level best to counsel him but it was too late. He could not come out of the trap," says Sukhchain's wife Sonia, who is now struggling to survive with three children. Sukhchain's brother, Satnam Singh, is a witness to five drug overdose deaths in his neighbourhood. "I have personally seen four to five drug overdose deaths in our locality. Gora (22) and Bhura (24) died in March and November this year. A similar number of youths are on death beds. They might die soon," said Satnam Singh, adding that drugs were freely available in the locality. Punjab continues to be in the grip of drugs and addiction despite the claims made by the political parties to the people during the elections. Former Punjab Chief Minister promised the people to make Punjab a drug-free state in just four weeks. Meanwhile, the government will ensure that Punjab's youth wield a pen and not the injections. An estimated 190 drug overdose deaths have been reported in various parts of the state during the past eight months from March 15 onwards. Bathinda, with 31 drug overdose² deaths, tops the charts, followed by Tarn Taran and Ferozepur, which have reported 24 and 21 deaths respectively. Jalandhar and Muktsar have reported 14 and 13 deaths, while Ludhiana and Amritsar districts have reported an estimated 11 deaths each during the past eight months. Patiala, Fazilka, Faridkot and Kapurthala have reported five to seven drug overdose deaths. The president of Kirti Kisan Union, said that he has been an eyewitness to many drug overdose deaths. Drug smuggling and peddling, according to him, are being patronised by corrupt police officials. "Police officials are involved in drug trafficking. Half of the police officials are drug addicts. What can be expected from tainted police officers? When the police are selling the drugs themselves, how can the menace be controlled? Police officials involved in drug smuggling³ and peddling have kept their own agents in villages who sell drugs without any fear. Meanwhile, Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) spokesperson claims that it is due to the nexus of corrupt officials and smugglers that home delivery of the drugs is also available.⁴

The survey also stated that Punjab's economy only registered a growth rate of 4.6 per cent per annum from 2011-12 to 2013-14 and the per capita income grew only 3.05 per cent as compared to the leading states which were growing more than seven per cent. Another reason besides unemployment responsible for the drug addiction was poverty. Satnam Singh, whose brother Sukhchain Singh died of a drug overdose in Zira in April this year, told us that the labour class was under pressure to earn more money. "They use drugs to boost stamina for extended working hours. The rising prices have compelled the common man to earn more. My brother initially started taking drugs to work more and then became an addict," he said.⁵

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II.DISCUSSION

Once at the top of the list in the use of drugs and even termed 'Udta Punjab', drug smuggling in Punjab remains a much-debated social, criminal and political issue. Despite the Punjab government forming a Special Task Force (STF) to curb the menace, it however still manages to haunt the state. But the state has now dropped to the third place with regards to the use and trafficking of drugs, according to the National Crime Record Bureau's (NCRB) report released this year. The report revealed that Uttar Pradesh has now occupied the top spot with 10,432 FIRs registered under the NDPS Act, followed by Maharashtra (10,078) and Punjab (9,972). The second edition of the book, 'Roadmap for Prevention and Control of Substance Abuse in Punjab', released by the community medicine department of Chandigarh's Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER) this year stated that more than 3 million people, or around 15.4 per cent of the population of Punjab, are currently consuming drugs. The drug trade in Punjab is estimated annually to the tune of Rs 7,500 crore. Several households have lost their family members to the drugs scourge. Maqboolpura is known as the village of orphans and widows, as majority of drug abuse victims hail from there.⁸ A total of 1,730 FIRs have been registered, of which 145 are related to commercial quantity. The police have also recovered 30 kg heroin, 75 kg opium, 9 kg marijuana and 185 quintals of poppy husk, 12.56 lakh tablets/capsules/injections/vials of pharma opioids from across the state. Marijuana enters Punjab through Himachal Pradesh, while opium and poppy husk come from Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. Amid rising concern, the Supreme Court this month had directed the state government to keep a check and be serious about the drug menace. In August this year, after carrying out month-long cordon and search operations in drug-affected areas besides patrolling vulnerable routes across the state, Punjab Police arrested as many as 2,205 smugglers, including 260 top criminals.⁹

Being situated near the Golden Crescent crossroads (Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran), also called the 'Triangle of Death', Punjab is a lucrative market for drug gangs. Ironically, it doesn't produce opium, cannabis or their derivatives nor does it manufacture psychotropic drugs. Punjab's 'chitta', a synthetic heroin derivative,¹⁰ has upended the lives of people across class, gender, age and place. Punjab alone accounts for over one-fifth of the total recoveries of heroin in the country. Opium is smuggled into Punjab from Sri Ganganagar and Hanumangarh districts in Rajasthan and Kathua in Jammu and Kashmir. Heroin is smuggled into India through Pakistan. More than 9,500 cases have been registered and 13,000 arrested under the NDPA Act by the Punjab Police this year so far. Synthetic drugs such as amphetamine and ecstasy come from Baddi in Himachal Pradesh and Delhi, said an official. The 'Udta Punjab' scenario is reflected in a study by the Institute for Development and Communications,¹¹ Chandigarh, which concluded that 75.8 per cent of the surveyed addicts lived in the border districts and were aged between 15-35 years. For over a decade, the Congress and Shiromani Akali Dal pummeled each other on the state's drug crisis.¹² The BSF was also dragged into the fight and 'narco politics' became a term of reference in the state's twisted drug vocabulary. In 2014, a retired IPS officer claimed that many politicians were involved in the racket either directly or through their cohorts with police backing. Nowadays, drug runners are innovating new ways to avoid detection. Narcotics are concealed in onion-laden trucks bound for Punjab from Gujarat or packed along with cumin seeds to suppress the smell.¹³

III. RESULTS

Retribution is cruel. India's western frontier is a no man's land for drug runners constantly engaged in a deadly cat-and-mouse game with law enforcement. Low-flying Pakistani drones ferry narcotics across the fence to Punjab in the dead of the night. Drug queenpins carry babies and drugs into Assam to disarm suspicious cops. From Gujarat to Manipur, and Punjab to Kerala, Drugistan defines the borderline between freedom and prison, life and death, hope and despair.¹⁴

Maqboolpura in Amritsar bears the dark sobriquet 'village of widows and orphans' because many of the men are dead from drug overdose. When the two children of one such trafficker in Tarn Taran in Punjab dropped out of school and became junkies, it was just part of the syndrome. By the time the parents knew, the boys, aged 18 and 21, had become hopelessly addicted. The family spent lakhs on their rehab. Subsequently, both boys overdosed in the space of a few months. Now the father is in jail, arrested under the NDPS Act.

Udta Punjab, the film that first brought to public attention the drug-driven decline of one of India's once-prosperous state, seems destined for a remake. Take the pathos-ridden story of Hargun and Rohan, two brothers in their twenties, hailing from a poor family in Amritsar. Hargun, a petty criminal, overdosed in Amritsar jail, where a

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leaked video showed inmates shooting up—around 47 percent of the state’s prisoners are users.¹⁵ Rohan, who came to attend his brother’s cremation, got hold of heroin and overdosed on the same day. Numerous prisoners with no record of drug use are found to have become addicts while doing time. Drugistan is where hope goes to die and violence patrols the village streets. Last week, an addict burned alive his wife, two children and in-laws in Jalandhar. Four young men dumped the corpse of their friend in a drain and fled; he had overdosed on drugs they had supplied him. The NCRB report 2013 put Punjab third in the list of drug-related crimes, after Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra.¹⁶ The drugs enter Punjab from neighbouring states—charas through Himachal Pradesh; opium and poppy husk from Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. In July 2014, the government sought ‘special category’ status for Punjab under the National Health Protection Scheme as the ‘biggest victim of Pakistan-sponsored narcotics terrorism’. There are 8.43 lakh registered drug addicts in the state, who are undergoing treatment in various de-addiction centres and clinics. Stories of drug tragedies engulf the storyline of the state, where unemployment is driving youth to crime or drugs. According to a report by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, over eight lakh people were unemployed in Punjab by the end of 2013—four lakh lost their jobs in the last five years. While the national unemployment average is 17.8 per cent, for Punjab it is 21.6 per cent.¹⁷

A report notes that Punjab’s debt is at an all-time high. The reason: no new jobs are coming. Private investments in manufacturing sector are dismal. Jobs in IT and other service sectors are scarce. The agrarian crisis caused by over-reliance on cash crops and mechanisation has exacerbated the problem. Drugs are an easy refuge.¹⁸

Punjab’s schools are case studies in addiction. A 19-year-old from Tarn Taran got his first fixes of heroin from his school seniors. It was the usual peddler’s gambit: trap a prospective victim with initial free supply and force them to pay once they are hooked. Needing money to pay his suppliers, the student became a peddler himself. When he couldn’t find money to buy drugs, the dealers proposed the usual deal: sell 10 packets and get one free. The vortex forced him to escalate his habit with injections and shared needles.¹⁹

Then one day he tested positive for HIV. Leading psychiatrist Dr Rana Ranbir Singh says, “The youth start taking drugs for a variety of reasons, to feel good, to relieve stress, to improve performance or just to experiment. The families do not report overdose deaths due to stigma attached to drug addiction.” Punjab Governor recently told the media, “Nowadays, schoolchildren are also developing a drug addiction. To curb the menace, we must fortify the six vulnerable border districts of Punjab, which is only possible through public support.” The state’s wealthy landowners are known to give labourers raw opium to give them more strength. With bhangra pop culture and gangsta rap that encourages violence and machismo, drugs have become ‘cool’ among the state’s youth.²⁰

Being situated near the Golden Crescent (Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran), also called the Triangle of Death, Punjab is a lucrative market for drug gangs. Ironically, it doesn’t produce opium, cannabis or their derivatives nor does it manufacture psychotropic drugs. Punjab’s chitta, a synthetic heroin derivative, has upended the lives of people across class, gender, age and place.²¹

Drug economics present a picture of acute profiteering and suffering: a research paper notes that heroin is procured from Afghanistan at Rs 1 lakh per kg. It is smuggled into India through Pakistan, and enters Punjab at 30-50 times the price. By the time it hits the international market, the price goes up to Rs 1-3 crore. A chitta addict has to pony up Rs 3,000 a day to feed his habit. More than 9,500 cases have been registered and 13,000 arrested under the NDPA Act by the Punjab Police this year so far.²²

The Udda Punjab scenario is reflected in a study by the Institute for Development and Communications, Chandigarh, which concluded that 75.8 per cent of the surveyed addicts lived in the border districts and were aged between 15–35 years. Vansh Bhardwaj, who played the role of a henchman in Udda Punjab, should know. He says, “These kinds of movies should be made off and on until the drug culture and mafia is finished. Such movies lead to awareness and public debate, which will force people to think again.” He could be referring to the 24-year-old post-graduate from a reputed Amritsar university, who became an addict under the influence of her boyfriend, an addict himself. Over three months, as she became regular on heroin, her studies went south. Thankfully, she broke up with her boyfriend. Now she is in a private de-addiction centre. An AIIMS Delhi study in 2014 revealed that 76 per cent of opioid dependents in Punjab were aged 18-35 years—even nine-year-olds used poppy husk and marijuana.²³

The drug mafia’s tentacles have spread beyond schools and colleges. An education department employee in the thirties had been depressed due to sexual problems in his marriage. He tried opium on the advice of a friend and

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became addicted. A truck driver from Jalandhar, his wife who worked as a maid, and their school-going teenage daughter were users, but unaware of each other's addiction: it was the daughter who got her mother on drugs. Sandeep Singh, a 33-year-old mechanic, died of an overdose in 2013. His mother Charanjit Kaur says, "He used to earn Rs 1,500 a day and spend it on drugs, which he had been doing for 12 years. When my husband and I told him that we would get him to a de-addiction centre, he said he would run away."²⁴

The origin of the drug miasma goes back to the terrorism days and spilled over to the political space later. For over a decade, Punjab's main parties (until AAP came to power), the Congress and SAD, pummelled each other on the drug crisis. The BSF was dragged into the fight; 'narco politics' became a term of reference in the state's twisted drug vocabulary. In 2014, a retired IPS officer claimed that many politicians were involved in the racket either directly or through their cohorts with police backing. He gave the SAD-BJP government a list of 90 people.²⁵

A wrestler-turned-drug peddler Jagdish Singh Bhola called out a state minister as the mastermind of drug trafficking, which SAD denied. In a plea before the Punjab and Haryana High Court, the officer claimed that "some of the black sheep in the Punjab Police, Narcotics Control Bureau, Intelligence Bureau and BSF are involved in drug smuggling". Then Minister of State for Home Affairs, Kiren Rijiju, told the Rajya Sabha that many Punjab cops, jail officials, and employees of BSF, Railway Protection Force and Chandigarh Police have been arrested for their involvement with drug gangs.

In spite of such corruption and connivance, Punjab's Police officers continue to wage war on drugs. The state's daredevil Special Task Force (STF) chief, is on the frontlines of that war. He was on his way with a team of 15 agents to pick up five drug runners, acting on a tipoff that they would stop at a wayside eatery on the Amritsar-Jalandhar highway. The Additional DGP (now Special DGP) was in civilian dress along with a senior officer. Other policemen, also in mufti, pretended to have lunch. The tense afternoon dragged on; two hours later, the smugglers drove up in a car. The driver pulled out his gun and fired back. A hail of gunfire ensued and the STF's superior numbers and firepower prevailed. The gangsters were arrested.²³

Udta Punjab is a movie, but in the battle on drugs, there are no second or third takes. The Punjab Police is jointly conducting operations with other agencies and have made big seizures from Maharashtra and Gujarat. CPs, SSP and SHOs have also been told to crack down on drug smugglers in each village and mohalla, targeting their supply lines."

It constituted the STF in 2015 and appointed head, but the team isn't adequately staffed. The force currently has only 415 officials compared to 1,580 personnel proposed on November 6 last year. To plug this gap, Punjab's villagers have taken up the age-old practice of thikri pehra (community policing). They verify the identity of visitors, and only if they are satisfied is the person allowed to enter. Technology is their friend; each village has a WhatsApp group comprising the sarpanch and panchayat members.

Should anyone spot a suspicious person, a message goes out and the thikri pehra is activated, and the intruder handed over to the police. "The STF has developed a strategy that balances law enforcement, de-addiction treatment and prevention." For instance, the Buddy programme is a school- and college-based drug prevention plan that leverages positive peer pressure and takes early preventive action.²¹

The doorstep model involves galvanising local volunteers to monitor their neighbourhoods. "We've streamlined the process to develop backward and forward linkages in investigation," Corruption in the police force, in spite of officers like him, is an ongoing menace. Senior officers have been arrested for taking bribes from druglords. Way back in 2015, the STF found that policemen and jail staff were actively involved in drug-related crimes.

Implications

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)'s World Drug Report 2012 points at India as one of the world's single-largest opiate markets. "Today there is no one Escobar or Chess Player," says a law enforcement officer, who has been trailing the drug mafia in India for 35 years.

While signing the interrogation report of a courier who had flown from Uganda with 80 capsules of methamphetamine in his stomach, he continues, "We get mules at airports, sea ports and railway stations hired to get the s**t here." The Indian authorities made the largest single seizure in the world in 2013—2,988 kg of Afghan heroin worth Rs 21,000 crore in the Port of Mundra, Gujarat.¹⁹

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This September, 20,000 kg of liquorice roots laced with heroin, valued at around Rs 1,725 crore, was caught by the Delhi Police Special Cell at JNPT Port in Mumbai. The latest NCB report says drug trafficking through maritime routes accounted for 70 percent of the total illegal load smuggled into India.

As many as 345 foreign nationals were arrested for the crime in 2013. “People in their mid-30s come on student visas with the sole purpose of peddling drugs on campuses. You catch them with fake passports, and you have a non-state actor who gets arrested, is out on bail and back on trade,” the officer lays it out. “We are not getting any exit reports, so where are the drugs going? Check with de-addiction centres if they are recording an increase in patient intake. It will at least tell us if the garbage coming in is for local use,” he adds.

While the sea is exploited as the biggest route for drug trade, small but regular consignments are seized at airports, railway and bus stations. “This shows the widespread distribution system post the pandemic that had restricted land use for movement. The use of dark net and cryptocurrency to purchase drugs lends extra anonymity.

Drugs are being ordered and shipped in through couriers and foreign parcels with fake names. What gets seized is a miniscule amount of what is actually being smuggled in,” says an officer. Not just narcotics, small and defunct chemical factories too are being clandestinely revived to manufacture new psychoactive substances (NPS) such as amphetamine and ecstasy.¹⁷

“The cocktail drugs being manufactured are extremely lethal because of unscientific combinations of chemicals, which are highly addictive,” says the officer. In one of the biggest seizures of amphetamine and cocaine in the country this year, the DRI on October 1 recovered 198 kg high-purity crystal methamphetamine (ice) and nine kg high-purity cocaine worth Rs 1,476 crore from a truck carrying Valencia oranges in Navi Mumbai.

In the North East, smuggling of Yaba—the madness drug or Nazi speed—is a cause of major concern. A combination of stimulants, largely caffeine and methamphetamine, Yaba was once widely popular in Bangladesh, where it was trafficked from Myanmar, before the 2014 crackdown in which 100 Yaba cartel members were killed.

The ‘crazy pill’ though found its way into the North East. According to unconfirmed reports, in Tripura, cartels are pushing Yaba as barter for fish from Bangladesh. Against the backdrop of this frenzied drug chase are testimonies of youth, caught in the web of loneliness and identity crisis. “I began smoking weed when I turned 14.

There were issues at home and school, which boys my age would have dealt better with, but I couldn’t. Soon, I went on to do multiple drugs. One morning I woke up at a cemetery, with the faintest idea of how I had landed between the graves. My eyes were red and my body stone-cold. I fished out some cocaine left in my pocket from the party the previous night. I did that line and I was ready to take on the world,” says a former addict from Bengaluru, who has been sober for the last seven years.¹⁵

Amit, a sound engineer in Mumbai, traces his journey into drugs a few years after he was gang-raped in Grade II by three men at a construction site. “Their clothes smelt foul. I was too shocked and embarrassed to tell anyone at home. I was a loner and used to my dad’s violence, but that incident (gangrape) changed me,” he recalls grimly.

The trauma of rape and his run-away-from-home incident forced his parents to seek psychiatric treatment for their only son. “I began abusing prescription drugs and would pop 40 pills a day. Soon a friend introduced me to weed and alcohol to stop me from pill-popping. I befriended gangsters, beat up my parents, sold my belongings to buy weed.

I would collapse on the streets soiled in my own muck and puke, and get up hours later with no memory of how I reached there,” narrates the 24-year-old, who has been clean for the last six years and now counsels young addicts. “Most often we see an identity crisis, lack of family support and motivation as reasons why young people, many of them as young as 14 or 15, get into drugs,” says Prof. Lenin Singh, Head of Department, Psychiatry, Regional Institute of Medical Sciences, Imphal.

It is not the young in metros alone who are widespread drug users. Youth in conflict zones are the easiest targets of drug and terror syndicates. A recent study by the National Drug Dependence Centre, AIIMS, revealed that Jammu and Kashmir has six lakh people—4.6 percent of the population—involved in drug-related issues. “Around 90 percent of them are in the age group of 17-33,” says a Srinagar-based psychiatrist.¹³

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“Thousands of youth, who were caught in the violence following Burhan Wani’s killing in 2015, felt they had nowhere to go. They were trapped in a summer of unending anger and violence on one side, and closed schools and colleges on the other,” he says.¹¹

In the world’s most militarised region, where terrorism thrives largely on cross-border narcotic trade, it’s the young who pay the price. With poppy as the main source of income for the Taliban and Pakistan, radicalised young men become drug mules driven by hatred against the Indian establishment.

Even in India’s most literate state Kerala, the scourge of drugs among youth is alarmingly prevalent. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said during a press conference in September that the state has recorded a three-fold increase in the cases of drug consumption in the last three years: 4,650 in 2013, 5,334 in 2013 and 16,986 cases have been reported so far in 2012.

A better understanding towards winning the war on drugs comes from the struggles of an addict. In the words of one: “The difference between knowing somebody’s got a big problem and being able to deal with it is massive. When the reality of where you’ve been, how much you’ve done, and the lies you’ve told dawn on you, it’s hard to face. It’s an emotional crisis. Those who have never done drugs will never understand the noises in the heads of those who do it; they want to come clean, but just can’t.” Instead of ‘Just Do it’, ‘Don’t or Die’ explains the narrative better of youth in turmoil.⁹

Punjab alone accounts for over one-fifth of the total recoveries of heroin in the country. The Golden Crescent is where the heroin and opium from Afghanistan enters India via Punjab border with Pakistan. Opium is smuggled into Punjab from Sri Ganganagar and Hanumangarh districts in Rajasthan and Kathua in Jammu and Kashmir.

Synthetic drugs such as amphetamine and ecstasy come from Baddi in Himachal Pradesh and Delhi. Cocaine and heroin are pushed by Nigerian drug peddlers from Uttam Nagar and Dwarka in Delhi. The seaports of Gujarat and Maharashtra have also emerged as the new route to bring in drugs into India.⁷

The latest is via Jodhpur in Rajasthan, as heroin is smuggled from Gujarat in trucks loaded with cumin seeds from Unjha in Mehsana.

The drug runners are innovating to avoid detection. Narcotics are concealed in onion-laden trucks to suppress the smell or packed along with cumin seeds for their journey in trucks bound for Punjab from Gujarat. In a 2014 haul, when 532 kg of heroin worth Rs 2,700 crore was seized from a check post at Attari border, the cache was sent from Pakistan in a consignment of rock salt ordered by an Amritsar trader.

Another 50 kg heroin was packed in poly-pouches and mixed in cartons of imported raisins from Afghanistan bound for cold storage depots in Sonapat, Haryana. Another clever drug mule trick is to use heroin-laced jute bags, which are later washed to release the drug.

Two years ago, a special cell of the Delhi Police recovered 150 kg of heroin from a spice consignment being transported in heroin-laced jute bags. The members of the ring used to process the empty bags in a reconstitution factory in Delhi to recover the narcotics.⁵

IV.CONCLUSIONS

According to the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), “Opioids produced in Central Asian nations are loaded onto dhows and transported through the Arabian Sea towards both west and east. In the east, they transit through South Asian countries, including India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives, to then reach further destinations.

This is known as the Southern Route, a well-established maritime path for opioids smuggling in the Indian Ocean Region. Drug production impacting Indian Ocean states takes place in two main regions: the Golden Crescent, comprising illicit opium production areas in Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the Golden Triangle, the second largest opium production region in the world, covering Myanmar, Thailand and Laos.³

While heroin produced in the Golden Crescent is trafficked through the Southern Route, drug production in the Golden Triangle has shifted to methamphetamines, including Yaba, smuggled into South and Southeast Asian countries.”²⁵

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3. ^ Nestler EJ (December 2013). "Cellular basis of memory for addiction". *Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience*. 15 (4): 431–443. PMC 3898681. PMID 24459410. Despite the importance of numerous psychosocial factors, at its core, drug addiction involves a biological process: the ability of repeated exposure to a drug of abuse to induce changes in a vulnerable brain that drive the compulsive seeking and taking of drugs, and loss of control over drug use, that define a state of addiction. ... A large body of literature has demonstrated that such ΔFosB induction in D1-type [nucleus accumbens] neurons increases an animal's sensitivity to drug as well as natural rewards and promotes drug self-administration, presumably through a process of positive reinforcement ... Another ΔFosB target is cFos: as ΔFosB accumulates with repeated drug exposure it represses c-Fos and contributes to the molecular switch whereby ΔFosB is selectively induced in the chronic drug-treated state.⁴¹ ... Moreover, there is increasing evidence that, despite a range of genetic risks for addiction across the population, exposure to sufficiently high doses of a drug for long periods of time can transform someone who has relatively lower genetic loading into an addict.
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