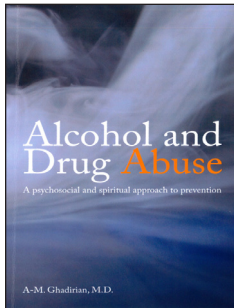


Substance Abuse



Alcohol and Drug Abuse: A Psychosocial and Spiritual Approach to Prevention

Abdu'l-Missagh Ghadirian. Oxford (GB): George Ronald Publisher Ltd; 2007. 161 p. US\$19.95

Reviewer rating: Good

Review by John Guilfoyle, MB, BAO, BCh, BA, FCFP
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Dr Ghadirian effectively outlines the history and scope of drug abuse in this introduction to one of the most difficult and perplexing issues that faces humanity. This is a wide ranging work which touches on various aspects of this topic. The strength of his analysis focuses on the key recognition that we use substances to fill what is essentially a spiritual vacuum. Drugs are abused by many as a distraction, whereby the pursuit of physical pleasure becomes the all-consuming purpose of life. He suggests that the essential nature of the human is spiritual, which requires recognition and nurturing. Substance abuse interferes with this process and retards the capacity of the person to know and recognize God and thus be

truly happy and fulfilled. This challenging claim is examined through the lens of the writings of the Baha'i Faith. He draws attention to the psychosocial aspects of drug abuse, outlining the factors that make this a problem that affects the privileged and the poor. This suggests that approaches to solving this problem will have to be broad-based and woven into the fabric of families and communities.

The book concludes that prevention of drug abuse is the only effective solution and offers that spiritual and secular approaches have to be integrated broadly. Because of the high-level perspective described and the constraints of brevity, only an outline of solutions at an individual and community level are offered. Rather, this work serves to sensitize those who are unaware of the scope of the problem and suggests a framework for solutions and action.

In combining a discussion of the spiritual nature of human existence and the pervasive scourge of drug abuse, Dr Ghadirian blazes a path that will need to be further explored by health care professionals, policy-makers, and educators. He ends with a proposal of sensible and challenging elements. Its implementation will require a profound change in attitude and orientation.

He shares with us a vision where drug use is restricted to appropriate medical use and healthy and productive alternative behaviours have replaced the destruction that continues to be wrought by substance abuse. This is a hopeful and optimistic perspective that clashes with current realities and should serve to encourage and motivate those who are involved in this difficult arena.

The realization of this vision will require a journey that will incorporate many of the elements alluded to in this book. It will be a long and arduous journey for humanity. This work is an important step along this path.