

The Distance Learning course SUPERA: twelve years of experience in the dissemination of SBI for hundred thousands of Brazilian professionals



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THE DRUG USE SCENARIO IN BRAZIL IN 2005

According to the II National Household Survey on Psychotropic Drugs, conducted in Brazil in 2005, and developed with a representative sample of the population from 12 to 65 years old who lived in the largest 108 Brazilian cities:

- 74% of the Brazilian population (about 38 million people at that moment) reported lifetime use of alcohol
- 22.8% (about 11.6 million people) reported other drugs lifetime use (see Figure 1)

Figure 2 shows the rates of people who meet criteria for drug dependence, varying from 0.1% (stimulants) to 12.7% (alcohol). However only a small proportion (2.9%) reported having received any kind of treatment (4.7% of Male and 1.6% of Female).

Among the reasons for low levels of assistance regarding substance related problems we found: people did not look for help due to fear to be stigmatized, low motivation to change, lack of knowledge of available health or social work services to support them, low number of professionals motivated and adequately trained to screen and provide assistance. This last factor has been associated with the fact that most Brazilian graduate courses in the areas of health, education, social work or law do not prepare the professionals to deal with substance related problems.

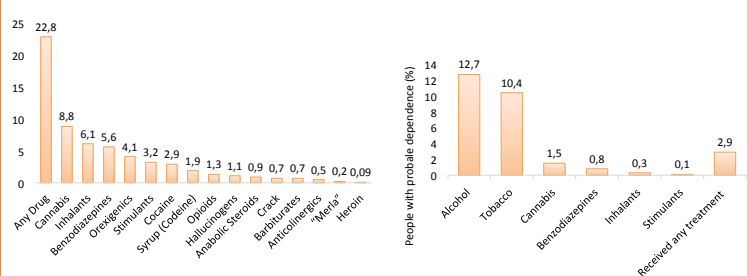


Figure 1 – Lifetime drug use reported by Brazilians (12-65 years old)/inhabitants of cities with 200.000+ people, in 2005, and percentage of people with probable dependence on drugs

THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES:



Dra. Paulina C. A. V. Duarte



Prof. Dr. Nelson dos S. Formigoni

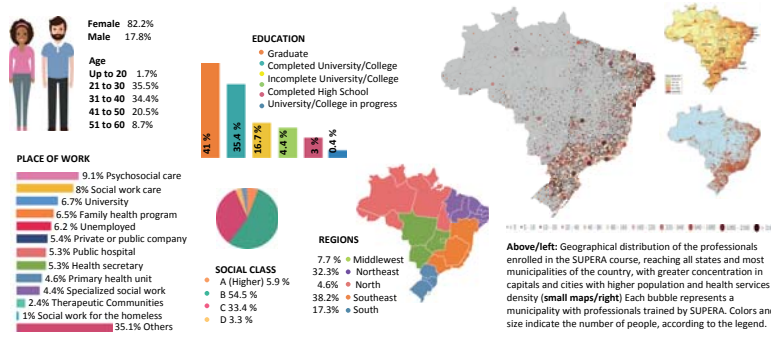
In order to training a large number of professionals, the National Secretary of Drug Policies (SENAD) coordinated at that time by Paulina Duarte supported the team of the Drug Dependence Unit (Department of Psychobiology of Escola Paulista de Medicina, Universidade Federal de São Paulo), coordinated by Maria Lucia O. S. Formigoni to develop a 4-month (150 h) distance-learning course named SUPERA (*Sistema para detecção do Uso de substâncias Psicoativas: Encaminhamento, Intervenção Breve, Reinserção social e Acompanhamento*, an acronym meaning *System for screening of psychoactive substances: referral, brief intervention, social reinsertion and follow-up*). In Portuguese, the word SUPERA means "Get over".

This course was developed in partnership with four federal universities from different Brazilian states (Rio Grande do Sul – UFRGS, Paraná – UFPR, Rio de Janeiro – UFRJ, Juiz de Fora/Minas Gerais – UFJF and Bahia – UFBA) whose researchers contributed to develop the contents and to disseminate the course in their regions.



RESULTS

From 2006 to 2017, twelve editions with 135,000 places were offered. 608,187 professionals enrolled to the course and 134,963 health professionals from all Brazilian states registered to it. Out of them, 75,846 professionals successfully completed the course (56.2%).



Considering the twelve editions, out of the professionals selected to start the course, 56.2% completed it successfully. Most of them (86%) reported not knowing SBI techniques before the course and 30% used them during the course. Most of those who finished the course successfully, reported feeling capable (93%) and motivated (87%) to provide brief interventions. Almost all of them (98%) would recommend the course to other professionals.



Post-course support: The participants were invited to follow updates and keep contact with tutors to solve doubts and exchange experiences using different tools: the email (poscurso@supera.org.br), the pages in social networks Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/superaed/>) and Instagram ([supera_poscurso](https://www.instagram.com/supera_poscurso/)).

In a previous study, developed by the post-course team (Carneiro & Souza-Formigoni, 2018) we demonstrated the SBI provided by professionals trained by the SUPERA course was effective in the reduction of alcohol, tobacco and cocaine related problems in patients classified as "suggestive of dependence". In 2018/2019 the 13th edition of the course was offered in partnership with the Universidade Virtual do Estado de São Paulo to 10,000 professionals.

Out of them 63,34% were approved, summing up 82,180 Brazilian professionals trained. The huge number of professionals who looked for the SUPERA course (more than 600,000 enrollments to the 135,000 places available), its good evaluation and the effectiveness of the SBI provided by their participants demonstrated distance-learning courses are a good alternative to disseminate SBI, mainly in countries with continental dimensions such as Brazil.

OBJECTIVES

The course aims to train health and social care professionals by encouraging them to know:

- the contexts in which drug use is made in Brazil;
- the acute and chronic effects of major drugs;
- how to apply techniques for screening and brief intervention;
- how to integrate the above mentioned knowledge into their daily practice;
- the multifactorial nature of drug addiction and the influence of biological, psychological and social factors in substance abuse vulnerability;
- the basic principles of different intervention models and treatments;
- the functioning of public health and social work systems, as well as the available community resources;
- how to design individual therapeutic projects;

MATERIALS

The course material was organized in 7 thematic modules: (1) The use of psychotropic substances in Brazil; (2) Psychotropic substances effects; (3) Screening of use and diagnosis of dependence on psychotropic substances; (4) Brief intervention; (5) Integrative care in the health network; (6) Treatment modalities and referral options; (7) The social work system and community networks. Those modules included texts (organized in printed booklets in the first five editions of the course (2006-2010) and as pdf files in all editions), available in the virtual platform of the course in the internet (www.supera.org.br) with open access after the end of each edition. Besides the texts, the virtual platform includes videos to illustrate the use of screening instruments (AUDIT and ASSIST) and Brief Interventions on alcohol, cocaine, amphetamines/benzodiazepines and cannabis; tools for communication with tutors to solve doubts, participation in forums to discuss the contents with other course participants and tutors, and evaluation tools.

Main page of SUPERA platform (access restricted to enrolled participants) with full access to the contents, organized in thematic modules, activities and complementary texts, forums, study calendar and evaluation schedule.

Public page of SUPERA course (with open access to previous edition contents)

Page of forum about module 3

Didactic material of SUPERA 12th edition

Video 1 - Retired man with alcohol problems

Video 2 - Woman user of amphetamines and benzodiazepines

Video 3 - Young adult cocaine user

Video 4 - Adolescent cannabis user

REFERENCES
CARNEIRO, APL; FORMIGONI, MLOS Country-wide distance training for delivery of screening and brief intervention for problematic substance use: a pilot evaluation of participant experiences and patient outcomes. Substance Abuse 39(1):102-109, 2018
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