Formation of healthy lifestyle as a tool to prevent psychoactive substance use and HIV infection in the Kyrgyz Republic

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Abstract. The article substantiates the need for further development of the program of formation of a healthy lifestyle among young people of the Kyrgyz Republic. It is the basis of the general health of the society. The purpose of this work is to understand the process of formation of healthy lifestyle (HL) as a tool for primary prevention of substance use and HIV infection in the Kyrgyz Republic. The main objective of the work was to analyze legal and regulatory acts and programs on healthy lifestyle formation among the population, review the most important international recommendations in the field of psychoactive substances (PAS) use and HIV/AIDS prevention, and study evidence-based interventions and strategies conducted in the Kyrgyz Republic. The researchers found that with joint activities and appropriate contribution of all participants involved in the process of formation of a healthy lifestyle of young people, it is possible to realize preventive education in the field of substance use and HIV infection, as well as timely detection and quality provision of medical, social and psychological assistance.

Keywords: health, prevention, community, family, health sector, school

1 Introduction

The health of each person constitutes the health of society and is the basis for the well-being of the state, representing a source of material well-being, physical, spiritual, and moral development of the state.

According to WHO specialists, health is formed by 20-23% of heredity, 50-55% depends on the lifestyle of a person, 20-25% on the state of the environment (ecology) and 8-12% on the work of the healthcare system. Based on this, it is possible to say that the extent of human health depends on lifestyle, which is based on the formation and promotion of health [1]. Formation of healthy lifestyles is a complex dynamic and long-term process that requires inter-sectoral interaction of various departments and structures, as well as the

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search for optimal ways and technologies. This article reflects only a part of the formation of healthy lifestyles regarding the issues of prevention of psychoactive substances use and HIV/AIDS. It is important to start the process of prevention of substance use and HIV/AIDS as early as possible since it is known that young people are more exposed to the risk of HIV/AIDS infection due to risky behavior associated with unprotected sexual contacts and substance use.

The purpose of the study is to determine the process of formation of a healthy lifestyle in the primary prevention of substance use and HIV infection in the Kyrgyz Republic. To achieve the goal of the study, the authors set the tasks to analyze the relevant legal acts and recent programs on the formation of healthy lifestyles among the population of the Kyrgyz Republic, including on the issues of substance use and HIV/AIDS. To review the most important international recommendations in the field of substance (PAS) use and HIV/AIDS prevention and scientific advances, including understanding the etiology of health risk behaviors. Evidence-based interventions and strategies implemented in the Kyrgyz Republic are examined. The object and subject of the study are statutory legal acts, prevention programs and recommendations in the field of prevention of substance use and HIV infection in the world, and in the Kyrgyz Republic.

Theoretical significance of this work is the allocation of the main indicators and regularities of the formation of a healthy lifestyle on the vectors of prevention of psychoactive substances use and HIV infection.

Practical significance of this work is the creation of an evidence base for the formation of substance use and HIV prevention policy in the Kyrgyz Republic, shifting the focus of primary prevention from the healthcare system to the education system with an emphasis on the leading role of the family.

2 Materials and methods

The methods of component analysis, generalization, interpretation and deduction of general scientific knowledge were used in writing the article and for the fulfillment of the set tasks.

3 Results

In recent years, the Kyrgyz Republic has developed and adopted laws and policies to prevent substance use among adolescents and young adults. To address the objectives of this article, the legal and regulatory acts governing health issues in the Kyrgyz Republic were studied. It was found that one of the basic principles of state policy in the field of health protection in the Kyrgyz Republic is the preventive orientation of healthcare. The legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic in the field of health was studied. The Laws of the Kyrgyz Republic “On Health Protection of Citizens in the Kyrgyz Republic”, “On HIV-infection”, “On Reproductive Rights of Citizens and Guarantees of their Realization”, “On HIV/AIDS in the Kyrgyz Republic”, “On Narcotic Drugs and Precursors”, as well as the Anti-Drug Programs of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, State Programs on Prevention of HIV/AIDS Epidemic, Strategies for Protection and Promotion of Health in the Kyrgyz Republic were researched. The main goal of the above legislation is the process of formation and maintenance of a healthy lifestyle through the format of presenting the knowledge necessary for making informed decisions about the health of each individual. The legislation also reflects the principles of preventive work with the population that do not contradict the canons of international conventions and recommendations, as well as the “Sustainable Development Goals” [2].
It is established that preventive measures in the Kyrgyz Republic to prevent the use of psychoactive substances and their consequences (HIV/AIDS) are carried out in three directions: primary, secondary and tertiary. These directions are carried out in the context of reducing the supply of illicit drugs (control of illicit trafficking of psychoactive substances); reducing the demand for illicit drugs; reducing harm from illicit drugs; ensuring the availability of controlled substances and access to them exclusively for medical and scientific purposes [3]. In this article, the focus will be on primary prevention.

Primary prevention in the Kyrgyz Republic is understood as the implementation of work and activities to form a healthy lifestyle with the joint work of healthcare, education, law enforcement, local government, civil society, parents and the media. Primary prevention includes strategies aimed at informing and motivating the population about the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle and motivating them to socially supportive behavior. This type of prevention is mainly based on pedagogical, psychological and social influence and is aimed at various population groups, including children, adolescents, parents, students, teachers and others.

The statutory basis for prevention is based on the basic laws. For example, the Health Protection Act of the Kyrgyz Republic states that prevention is carried out with the formation of the population’s commitment to a healthy lifestyle, with its active participation. It also defines “Medical prevention” as a set of medical services aimed at reducing the likelihood of disease, identifying causes and conditions contributing to their occurrence and spread, based on the personal interest of the patient. In this article, general prevention will be disclosed without focusing on its medical component. So, the very process of health protection of citizens is a set of measures of political, economic, legal, social, cultural, scientific, environmental, medical, sanitary-hygienic and anti-epidemic nature, aimed at preserving and strengthening the physical and mental health of each person, providing them with medical care in case of loss of health. According to the World Health Organization, the concept of “health” came into force in 1948 and carries in its definition as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, not only the absence of disease and physical defects. Also includes a set of internal and external conditions of life activity that ensure the health and working capacity of the individual, his active longevity, as well as the harmonious development of personality [4]. In addition to the basic laws, the issues of young people’s awareness of substance use and HIV infection are addressed in all State programmes to stabilize the HIV/AIDS epidemic. As part of these programs, schools actively conduct extracurricular activities to promote healthy lifestyles, which included topics related to substance use and HIV/AIDS through the format of reproductive health.

The study of international reviews found many methods to encourage young people to adopt healthy lifestyles and increase activity to promote physical health. These methods mainly stimulate to lead a healthy lifestyle not only by informing people about the positive and negative impact of various forms of behavior on human health, but also by forming beliefs and opportunities to change their own behavior to improve their health. So the main components of the formation of a healthy lifestyle are physical activity, appropriate to age and state of health, balanced nutrition, avoidance of smoking and use of psychoactive substances including alcohol, compliance with the rules of personal hygiene, education of the younger generation of healthy habits and creation of a safe and favorable environment, development and support of people’s desire for positive changes in lifestyle [5].

According to the “International Standards on Drug Use Prevention” Prevention is the healthy and safe development of children so that they can realize their talents and potential and contribute to society [6]. The main goal of prevention is to be able to avoid the initiation of drug use. Scientific evidence in the prevention field indicates that many substance use prevention interventions also prevent other high-risk behaviors and their
consequences, including HIV [7]. Prevention strategies based on scientific evidence for working with families, schools, and the community can keep children and youth healthy and safe. Every dollar spent on prevention contributes to saving at least ten dollars in the future. These include health-related costs, social costs, and crime-related costs [8]. Substance use prevention interventions are delivered at different levels of exposure and according to the age of the individual. The levels of exposure are family, school, community, work and health sector.

![Levels of health promotion](image)

**Fig. 1.** Levels of health promotion.

It will be further described by levels and sectors of healthy lifestyle formation.

In the “Family” sector, issues of substance use and HIV prevention, are presented according to international standards it is necessary to conduct the following interventions: “Patronage of pregnant women and infants”, “Interventions aimed at pregnant women with substance use disorders”. In the Kyrgyz Republic, pregnancy management is carried out in this direction, considering the state of women’s health. If a woman is addicted to substance use, drug addiction doctors together with obstetricians manage this case until the birth of the child and the first days of birth. All polyclinics in the country have “Mother’s Schools”, where women are trained in basic knowledge of caring for a newborn and how to recover from childbirth, and in some offices the issues of the mental basis for meeting the needs of the child are covered [9].

In the same sector, but in the non-medical part, according to the mentioned standards it is considered proven and effective to conduct activities to strengthen family ties, i.e. attachment between parents and children, to activate the role of parents in the upbringing, education and in general life of their children. For example, a parent should know what his/her child is doing and whom they are friends with. Provide training for parents to form positive discipline according to their children’s developmental level, and to be a role model themselves. These sessions should be accessible and appealing to parents (e.g., holding sessions after hours, providing meals, childcare, transportation, small rewards for completing these sessions, etc.). The average cycle of sessions is around 10, but more are held when working with parents from disadvantaged (where one or both parents have a substance dependency) or disadvantaged groups. The sessions are conducted for parents and children with the help of well-prepared trainers. In the Kyrgyz Republic, this part of prevention is not systematic or widespread.

In the “healthcare” sector, according to international standards, health promotion work consists of short-term interventions and individual counseling, which are conducted mainly among persons at high risk of substance abuse who do not plan to seek treatment. Brief sessions provide an initial assessment of substance use-related health problems and
HIV/infection and support decision-making and goal-setting for further case management. Information materials are provided during the sessions. In the Kyrgyz Republic, this practice has been introduced in all polyclinics during preventive check-ups for pregnant women [10]. Primary healthcare workers work according to the “Management of pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum period in women who use psychoactive substances”, “Clinical management of neonatal withdrawal syndrome in newborns born to mothers who use psychoactive substances”, “Screening of pregnant women for substance use using the ASSIST test” clinical protocols” [11].

In the “school” sector, it can be noted that in the Kyrgyz Republic the response of the education system to the formation of a healthy lifestyle is realized within the framework of three components of educational activities – compulsory, optional and extracurricular. As a rule, the issues of substance use and HIV prevention are not separated into narrowly themed courses, but are integrated into the programs of compulsory subjects and optional classes aimed at promoting healthy lifestyles and safe living. It can be noted that educational programs consist of a set of activities, such as preventive talks with students and their parents, distribution of information materials (leaflets, booklets), holding health days and months, poster, drawing and essay contests, involving students in various hobby clubs and sports sections, individual and group consultations by school psychologists, and placing students found to be using substances on the in-school register and referring them for counseling and treatment.

The Ministry of Education and Science is conducting prevention programmes in general, vocational, technical and higher education institutions in the form of special courses to train teaching staff to introduce the basics of healthy lifestyles among adolescents and young people. Professional development programmes for the heads of educational authorities and institutions and general education teachers include hours on health issues and the prevention of substance use and HIV infection. E-learning opportunities are widely used.

The school drug use prevention program “Your Choice”, which consists of 12 sessions and is based on the development of life skills and social influence for schoolchildren aged 12-14, is being implemented. Every year, class hours are organized in the form of actions, debates and round tables on special dates (Health Day, HIV/AIDS Anti-Drug Day). However, these activities are not conducted on a regular basis within the framework of individual projects (“Dance for Life”, “Safety Route”) and do not cover young people living in rural areas, in orphanages and boarding schools [12].

Currently, under the approved Healthy Schools Program, the subject “Culture of Health” is taught from 1st to 8th grade, where issues of substance use and HIV/AIDS prevention are included. A 24-hour course on health promotion is also included in the curriculum of all vocational schools in the country. Since 2014, “Healthy Lifestyle” training programs have been developed and implemented for students in grades 6-11. The training program includes not only the provision of theoretical knowledge, but is also aimed at the formation of healthy lifestyle skills in young people, allowing them to navigate the issues of prevention of substance use and HIV/AIDS. It should be noted that to teach methodologies for conducting healthy lifestyle activities in schools, a training course for pedagogical specialties in the “Life Safety” subject was introduced in 2017 at the I. Arabaev Kyrgyz State University. In addition to work on the formation of healthy lifestyles among organized youth, classes are held with parents at school on constructive relationships in the family, identification of the first signs of substance use by adolescents, rapid family intervention and prevention of risky behavior of adolescents, including reproductive health. Classes are based on the “Closer Together – Away from Drugs” guide addressed to class teachers, social educators, psychologists, and juvenile affairs inspectors [13].
The issues of drug prevention and HIV infection are also reflected in the “Crime Prevention and Legal Culture” training and educational module, which, taking progressive educational technologies into account, offers methodological materials and links to additional sources for the preparation and conduct of various forms of classes, containing materials to raise students’ awareness of the drug and psychoactive substances use consequences, responsibility for drug-related offenses, and measures taken in our country [14].

Periodically, with the financial support of international organizations, interactive training sessions are held for general school teachers and university professors in all regions of the country, and educational and methodological manuals and information materials on the prevention of substance use and HIV infection have been developed and published.

It should be noted that the Kyrgyz Republic has ratified all international human rights conventions on health and quality of life. It has joined several international agreements on drug policy and HIV/AIDS. Even though the Kyrgyz Republic has long been committed to international standards of prevention of substance abuse and HIV infection, nevertheless, a study conducted among young people shows a low level of knowledge on HIV/AIDS [15].

In this regard, the formation of a healthy lifestyle among the population is a priority, and much attention is paid to the health of children and young people to create conditions for access to physical education and sports. Also, within the framework of cooperation between the state and local communities, activities aimed at increasing motor activity and sports, knowledge about healthy nutrition and formation of values of a healthy lifestyle are carried out among young people. The main goal of these activities is the all-round physical development of young people based on spiritual values and moral purity.

It is important to note the approaches oriented towards the effective formation of a culture of physical, mental and spiritual health, considering the interests and needs of young people. In many regions of the country there is a network of youth centers aimed at ensuring the active participation of young people in cultural, educational, sports and recreational activities at the level of local communities. Campaigns and contests are held to promote healthy lifestyles, and there is also a process of expanding sports sections and organizing sports events. The educational work on formation of a healthy way of life by means of national sports and folk games is also noted.

4 Discussion

The study of the process of regular monitoring and evaluation of the performance of educational programs through the measurement of students’ knowledge, skills and health behavior is also a topic for discussion. Since the assessment of health learning based on students’ skill building is a familiar measure of student performance and monitoring of students’ educational progress.

The school platform is not only an ideal safe environment to implement skill-based health learning, but also for their parents or guardians. A safe environment in which it is possible through role play, discussion, situation modeling and other exercises to develop healthy lifestyle skills such as following hygienic procedures throughout the day, eating well, drinking regimen, and motor activity.

5 Conclusion

The Kyrgyz Republic has accumulated extensive and diverse experience in the development and implementation of educational programs aimed at preventing substance use and HIV infection. The basis of these educational prevention programs on substance
use and HIV/AIDS is timely, systematic and accessible information on various aspects of health. In the Kyrgyz Republic, the implementation of programs aimed at reducing the spread of HIV infection and substance use among young people are important components of national HIV/AIDS prevention strategies. Nevertheless, for the successful implementation of the program of formation of a healthy lifestyle, including prevention of substance use and HIV/AIDS in the country, it is necessary to create conditions for systematic, interagency cooperation at all levels of formation of the postulates of a healthy lifestyle with the necessary involvement of young people, representatives of their immediate environment (friends, teachers and parents).

Only with joint activity and appropriate contribution of all participants involved in the process of formation of a healthy lifestyle of young people it is possible to realize preventive education and provision of medical, social and psychological assistance. It is impossible not to consider the influence of spiritual and religious principles of upbringing, which are beginning to gain momentum in the republic. Work with families involves educating parents and other family members about the psychological characteristics of adolescents, as well as the risks of substance use and HIV infection. Work with families in the country is in a latent state and requires further study on ways to introduce mechanisms for creating a system of work with parents. It is necessary to systematically conduct awareness-raising and educational work with parents to train them in communication skills, upbringing, child support, strengthening family ties, and preventing substance use and HIV infection. It is also worth paying attention to the fact that there is no emphasis on activities to make adolescents aware of their own personal, family and social resources in the Kyrgyz Republic. Also, some issues of educating parents on overcoming intra-family problems — problems of relationships with children particularly — are missing.

It is necessary to create a database (electronic) with data on the activities and services of psychologists, narcologists, communities (self-help groups, youth groups) of various organizations, crisis centers and helplines, volunteer organizations on substance use and HIV/AIDS, and medical institutions. In the prevention of substance use and HIV infection among young people, it is necessary to pay great attention to properly organized leisure activities and the reasonable use of free time, taking the age-related interests and needs of students into account. Educational institutions can have close contact with the family, interact with local communities and government structures to develop and implement comprehensive prevention education. Only with competently organized comprehensive work, a school with its own safe educational space can provide not only basic knowledge on subjects, but also use a comprehensive approach to form a healthy lifestyle, the desire to overcome life’s difficulties and cope with stress without substance abuse. The state has the main role in organizing all activities to prevent substance use and HIV infection. Thus, according to the Guidelines for Educational Outreach and other international standards, it is necessary to ensure that all children, adolescents and young people have access to prevention education programs, activities and services in the community. The government should pay special attention to the coverage of prevention programs for unorganized (non-student) youth and young people at risk.

The educational part of the participants of prevention programs should also be emphasized. Thus, it is necessary to provide quality university training and periodic professional development for teachers of prevention-oriented subjects, as well as psychologists, social educators and medical workers of educational institutions. An important part in the formation of a healthy lifestyle among the younger generation is the relationship between them and their parents. This part is debatable and constitutes the basis for future research in this direction.
It should be separately noted that it is necessary to use the possibilities of modern information and communication technologies, including the Internet and social media networks for teaching communication skills and education of a healthy personality.

The solution of the set preventive tasks in the field of preventing the spread of HIV infection among young people is possible only in case of personal interest in the work and motivational readiness of representatives of all prevention subjects.

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