

GULF TIMES

'Up to 5% of population' addicted to alcohol or drugs

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Staff Reporter

Up to 5% of Qatar's population, aged 18-60 years, is addicted to either alcohol or drugs, a [Supreme Council of Health](#) official said yesterday

"Between 3 to 5% of Qatar's population is addicted to either alcohol or drugs, which is why we want to establish the Drug Addiction Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre in order to tackle the problem head on," [Supreme Council of Health's Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre medical director Dr Mounir Soussi](#) told a press conference.

The press conference was held to welcome two Italian delegations from San Patrignano Community and University of Uninettuno, who are in Qatar for collaborations with the council on distance/e-learning education on treating addiction.

According to Soussi, the addiction figure in Qatar is comparable to elsewhere in the region. "The rate of addiction seen here is similar to other countries within the Gulf and Arab region. And mostly adults are those found addicted to alcohol while young people tend to abuse substances such as vitamins," he said.

He expected the Drug Addiction Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre to be complete by 2014. It will have up to 250 beds. A specific unit is being planned for women in the new facility.

In the meantime, a temporary structure of 28-bed capacity to offer



From left: [Supreme Council of Health's Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre medical director Dr Mounir Soussi](#) with [Public Health Department director Dr Mohamed al-Thani](#), [United Nations Goodwill Ambassador in the year 2000 Letizia Moratti](#), who led an Italian delegation, and other officials.

treatment for addiction will be ready within the next three months in the Rayyan area.

Soussi explained that treatment of addicts was now being done by the Social Rehabilitation Centre, which is offering a bio-psycho social and spiritual programme to rehabilitate addicts.

"At the Social Rehabilitation Centre, addicts are being given the programme, comprising a 10-day detoxification exercise and another 30 days of psycho-social discharge, including aftercare and daycare," he explained.

The programme includes religious counselling based on experience gleaned from neighbouring countries such as Saudi Arabia, he said.

The Social Rehabilitation Centre is working with the Hamad Medical Corporation's Psychiatry Department to identify those having dual diagnosis of addiction and mental health problems, Soussi mentioned.

On combating stigmatisation of

drug and substance abuse addicts, which is said to be preventing many from seeking help locally, Soussi said: "We have a programme to combat stigma. Meanwhile, it is impossible for us to prevent anyone from going abroad if they choose to because we are aware that people seek treatment in places like Lebanon and Egypt but we usually guarantee them privacy and confidentiality."

The official said that the addiction treatment and rehabilitation centre was strictly for Qataris now but could be expanded to cater to expatriates in future.

"The centre will cater to all kinds of addictions, including alcohol and drug, even though drug addiction is not a big problem here. In future we plan to have units for other types of addiction, to things like the Internet, gambling and food (addiction to a special kind of food)," SCH Public Health Department director Dr Mohamed al-Thani said.