

Abuse of soft drugs backed by students

By Angela Szeto

ONE in six international secondary school students regard the use of "soft" drugs as socially acceptable, despite increased educational efforts and growing community awareness.

A survey conducted by the Community Drug Advisory Council in March 1990 showed that nearly 30 per cent of polled teenagers aged 17 felt that the social use of marijuana was acceptable.

With 16 per cent of all surveyed students thinking that use of marijuana was acceptable, Dr Jeffrey Day of CDAC said there was cause for concern.

"The lack of awareness of the danger of illegal drugs is the most worrying trend," Dr Day said.

"Young people are resistant to changing their attitudes towards substance abuse."

A thousand students at international secondary schools, aged between 12 and 17, were questioned on their attitudes and use of drugs.

The last survey conducted by the CDAC was in 1988.

Although the survey showed no dramatic in-

“
The lack of awareness of the danger of illegal drugs is the most worrying trend. Young people are resistant to changing their attitudes towards substance abuse.

— Dr Jeffrey Day,
Community Drug
Advisory Council

crease in drug abuse, Dr Day said that there was no room for complacency.

"The danger of the drugs issue is that compared with the smoking issue, it tends to be over-emphasised," Dr Day said.

"But then I think that smoking tends to be under-emphasised."

From a recent Hong-kong University survey, 10 per cent of Primary Four students take up smoking.

"It is out of that 10 per cent, which grows to 30 to

40 per cent in the 13 to 14-year-old age group, that we get our drug addicts," Dr Day said.

Deputy Principal of Island School, Tim Hardingham, agreed there was "always cause for concern and the need to keep parents and the community alerted".

"But I don't believe that there is cause for undue alarm at this stage. (Drug abuse) goes on in a small way all the time, it's only when someone gets caught that it becomes a huge thing," he said.

"We are aware that there is an underlying sub-culture that is fascinated with drugs and there will always be those who fall to temptation."

However, more students feel that LSD is socially acceptable than in the past.

"I suspect that this is because teachers have tended to ignore LSD," Dr Day said.

In contrast to the general trend of student attitudes towards drugs, the social acceptability of alcohol has decreased among the youngsters surveyed.