Substance Abuse

WOMEN’S HEALTH: A PUBLIC HEALTH PERSPECTIVE

Class Objectives

• Understand the difference between proper and improper drug use, and the effects drug use and abuse have on individuals and society.

• Recognize the biological, cultural, and legal factors the influence how and why women use drugs.
### Test Your Knowledge – From the Reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drug</th>
<th>Any chemical other than food that is purposely taken to affect body processes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recreational Drug</td>
<td>Drug taken purely for fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Misuse</td>
<td>Taking a drug for a purpose than it was originally intended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Abuse</td>
<td>Excess drug use that is inconsistent with medical practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Dependency</td>
<td>Repeated use of a drug because user has change in mood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerance</td>
<td>Body’s ability to withstand effects of a drug</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Types of Drugs

- Stimulants
- Depressants and anti-anxiety drugs
- Cannabis
- Psychedelics and hallucinogens
- Narcotics
- Inhalants
- Designer drugs
## Test Your Knowledge –
### Type of Drug and Health Effect

- **Stimulants:**
  - Increases heart rate, blood pressure, strength of heart contractions, blood glucose level, muscle tension
- **Depressants:**
  - Relaxes the CNS and decrease functions
- **Cannabis:**
  - Causes alterations in perception and reactions; increases heart rate
- **Psychedelics and hallucinogens:**
  - Alters perception, thoughts, reality, mood, sensation, heart rate, body temperature; possible acute anxiety attack
- **Narcotics:**
  - Slows respiration, pain levels; high potential for abuse; over time, heart infections, skin abscesses, lung congestion
- **Inhalants:**
  - Slows bodily functions; over time, liver failure, kidney failure, respiratory failure, destruction of bone marrow and skeletal muscles
- **Designer drugs:**
  - Chronic use may cause brain damage, significant impairment in visual and verbal memory

## Effects of Drug Use

- Physiological changes
- Mental dependence
- Conflicts in interpersonal relationships
- Drug-related crime
- Creation of treatment facilities
- Loss of individual productivity
- Care for children of drug-dependent parents
- Policing of illicit drug availability
- Treatment of medical complications
Substance Abuse among Women

Epidemiology of Substance Abuse

“Telescoping”

- Accelerated progression from the initiation of substance use to the onset of dependence and first admission to treatment.
- More common among women
  - Opioids
  - Cannabis
  - Alcohol

Factors Affecting Likelihood of Use

- Biological Issues
- Stress
- Co-Occurring Disorders:
  - Mood and Anxiety
  - Eating Disorders
  - Post-Traumatic Stress
Drug Dependency: Treatment

- Detoxification
- Therapeutic communities
- Outpatient drug-free programs
- Gender differences in treatment programs

Legal, Economic, and Social Dimensions
### Legal Dimensions

- Drug use disproportionately affects people of color
- Hispanic and African American drug offenders have a greater chance of being sentenced to prison than white offenders (40% and 20%)
  - African Americans also receive longer prison sentences than do white offenders.
- The number of women incarcerated for drug offenses has risen 900% since 1980
  - African American and Hispanic women represent a disproportionate share of this increase.
  - Less likely to receive drug treatment.

### Legal Issue: Drug abuse during pregnancy

- Increases risk for negative outcomes such as:
  - ________________
  - ________________
  - ________________
  - ________________
- Many states using legal/criminal response
  - About 80% of women charged with crimes for drug abuse during pregnancy are women of color
- Few states view drug abuse as a sign of need for treatment
- Discourages women from seeking prenatal care

What do you think?
Economic Dimensions

- Use and abuse of illicit drugs ~ $200 billion a year in economic damages

- Societal Costs:
  - Burden of drug-related crime
  - Creation of treatment facilities
  - Loss of individual productivity
  - Care for children of drug-dependent parents
  - Policing of illicit drug availability
  - Treatment of medical complications from drug use

Class Wrap-Up

- Key Words:
  - Key words from “Test your Knowledge” quizzes, telescoping

- Individual Importance:
  - It is important to understand the effects of a particular substance on a person’s physical and psychological well-being.

- Public Health Importance:
  - Substance abuse co-occurs with many other behavioral health issues for women.

- Socio/Economic Importance:
  - The cost to society is large for substance abuse; legal policies attempt to prohibit/limit the burden on society.