

Case Studies

Appreciating Addiction as a Treatable Disease

Vanessa de la Cruz, MD

Chronic Disease Case #1

76-year-old male with uncontrolled hypertension, cardiovascular disease with myocardial infarction, hypertension, elevated cholesterol levels, diabetes, gastroesophageal reflux disease, stent procedures and a variety of behavioral issues associated with the patient, including noncompliance with treatment plans, appointment cancellations and "no shows," and rude and demeaning behavior toward office staff.

Chronic Disease Case #2

59-year-old female with HIV, paranoid schizophrenia, obesity, hypertension, and hyperlipidemia. She is refusing to take any medications for medical or mental health conditions. When she speaks she rambles and complains of being monitored by microphones implanted in her walls. She lives in a group home and her basic needs are met, but she is often disheveled and slightly malodorous. Her CD4+ count is 130 and her viral load is 500,000.

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Chronic Disease Case #3

69-year-old man with type 2 diabetes presents with recent weight gain, and foot pain. He had been started on glyburide (Diabeta), 2.5 mg daily, but stopped taking it because of dizziness. He does not test his blood glucose levels at home and expresses doubt that this procedure would help him improve his diabetes control.

Diet history reveals excessive carbohydrate intake in the form of bread and pasta. His wife has offered to make him plain grilled meats, but he finds them "tasteless." He drinks 8 oz. of red wine with dinner each evening.

He stopped smoking more than 10 years ago. His hemoglobin A1c (A1C) has never been <8%. His blood pressure has been measured at 150/70, 148/92, and 166/88 mmHg on separate occasions during the past year. He does not practice any preventive foot care.

Chronic Disease Case #4

38-year-old female in an abusive relationship with alcoholism, depression, and pelvic inflammatory disease. Frequently misses scheduled appointments or shows up an hour or more late. Sometimes presents to clinic smelling of alcohol or appearing intoxicated. Often has bruises and or cuts on her face, neck, arms and legs.