Substance Use Disorders and Stigma

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Roadmap

• Define substance use disorder and stigma
• Explore how language and attitudes affect our perception of people with substance use disorders
• Explore using “person-first” language to reduce stigma
• Recognize substance use disorders as chronic diseases
Let’s Get Technical

• A **Substance Use Disorder (SUD)** is a problematic pattern of use of a certain drug/class of drug that leads to **clinically significant impairment or distress** that causes:

  - Cravings to Use
  - Loss of Control
  - Continued Use Despite Consequences

• Drug classes include opioids, stimulants (methamphetamines, cocaine), alcohol, marijuana, tobacco, caffeine, etc.
Let’s Get Technical

- **Opioids** (also called “opiates” and “narcotics”) are a class of drugs that include heroin, fentanyl, morphine, oxycodone, tramadol, and codeine.

- **Opioid Use Disorder (OUD)** is a pattern of opioid use that leads to problematic behavior in a person’s life.
Let’s Get Technical

- **Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT)** is the use of medications in addition to counseling and behavioral therapies to treat opioid use disorder.
- MAT is the standard of care in the treatment of opioid use disorders!
What is **Stigma**?

- Negative stereotypes assigned to a group of people when their attributes are considered *different* from or *inferior* to societal norms *(Goffman 1963)*

  - Structural
  - Social
  - Individual
  - Self
Stigmatization in Local News

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9gT9NvLw65k
Mr. Jones is a substance abuser who abuses heroin and is attending a treatment program in court. As part of the program, Mr. Jones is required to stay clean from alcohol and other drugs. However, last month he tested dirty in his urine for opioids. He reports that he was under family stress and relapsed, but he wants to stop abusing drugs. He has been a substance abuser for the past 5 years. He now awaits his appointment with the judge to determine his status.
Think Pair Share Exercise

• As a pair, answer these questions:
  ◦ What is your mental image of Mr. Jones?
  ◦ Did he do something wrong?
  ◦ What should the judge do?
Think Pair Share Exercise

Mr. Jones has an opioid use disorder with heroin use and is attending a treatment program in court. As part of the program, Mr. Jones is required to remain abstinent from alcohol and other drugs. However, last month he tested positive on his urine toxicology for opioids. He reports that he was under family stress and resumed heroin use, but he wants to stop misusing drugs. He has had a substance use disorder for the past 5 years. He now awaits his appointment with the judge to determine his status.
Think Pair Share Exercise

• As a pair, answer these questions:
  ◦ How does your mental image of Mr. Jones change?
  ◦ What are the differences between the two paragraphs?
Group Share

• Mr. Jones is a substance abuser who abuses heroin and is attending a treatment program in court. As part of the program, Mr. Jones is required to stay clean from alcohol and other drugs. However, last month he tested dirty in his urine for opioids. He reports that he was under family stress and relapsed, but he wants to stop abusing drugs. He has been a substance abuser for the past 5 years. He now awaits his appointment with the judge to determine his status.

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Language Matters

• Use “person-first language”
  ◦ Put the person before a diagnosis
  ◦ Describe what a person “has” rather than what a person “is”

• Our medical conditions do not define us
### Language Matters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSTEAD OF...</th>
<th>USE...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Addict, junkie, alcoholic, drug abuser, dope fiend, crack head</td>
<td>Person with a SUD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug abuse</td>
<td>Addiction, SUD, misuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean/Dirty</td>
<td>Abstinent/actively using. Neg/Pos (utox)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former addict</td>
<td>Person in recovery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relapse</td>
<td>Resumption, recurrence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stigma is **Harmful**

- People who experience stigma are:
  
  less likely to seek or be offered treatment
SUDs are Treatable Chronic Diseases

A Winding Path
(Chronic, Relapsing Condition)

No Wrong Door!
When asked to stop “cold turkey,” as few as one in ten patients are able to succeed.

When medications are used, more than half of people are able to stop opioid use.
People are 50% less likely to die when they take medications for opioid use disorder.
What Can **We** Do?

- Practice “person-first” language
- Encourage positive attitudes and language in clinic
- Encourage patients to ask questions and seek treatment
- Share that substance use disorders are treatable
- Alert providers and behavioral health team members when patients screen positive on substance use questions (AUDIT/DAST)
Why Does Stigma Matter?

- Substance Use Disorder (SUD) is among the most stigmatized conditions in the U.S. and around the world
- Healthcare providers treat patients with substance use disorders differently due to stigma
- People with a substance use disorder who expect or experience stigma have poorer healthcare outcomes

(SAMHSA, 2018)
Language Changes Treatment

• A randomized clinical trial of doctoral-level clinicians looked at the impact that language had on judging a person with SUD.

“Compared to those in the ‘substance use disorder’ condition, those in the ‘substance abuser’ condition agreed more with the notion that the character was personally culpable and that punitive measures should be taken.”

(Kelly 2010)