

Recognizing the Nurse in Crisis

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Faculty

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Objectives

- Define chemical dependency
- List three behavioral symptoms of a nurse in crisis
- List three physical symptoms of a nurse in crisis

Objectives

- List at least 2 of the most addictive drugs
- Discuss the implications of substance misuse on the patient, co-worker, and agency

Chemical Dependency

- One of the leading health problems in the United States
- Classified as an endemic in our society
- Causes of dependency are multi factorial

Chemical Dependency

- A treatable medical illness with recognizable symptomatology
- Characterized by physical or psychological dependence on mood altering substances; tolerance; and relapse
- Costs of dependency are significant

The Disease

- **Chemical dependency is a primary disease**
 - **Not a symptom of other diseases, i.e. stress**
- **Chemical dependency is chronic**
 - **It is a permanent condition**

The Disease

- **Chemical dependency is progressive**
 - **If left untreated symptoms will worsen**
- **Chemical dependency is fatal**
 - **Associated with overdose, death, suicide and organ/system failure**

Causes of Chemical Dependency

- **Genetic predisposition**
- **Family and peer influence**
- **Sexual abuse in childhood**
- **Low self esteem**
- **Self treatment of mental illness**
- **Stress**
- **Injury/chronic pain**

The Nurse in Crisis

- **6% to 8% of nurses misuse a substance**
- **Misuse among nurses statistically mirrors that of society as 10% of the general population has the disease of addiction**
- **Nurses are equally susceptible to alcoholism**

The Nurse in Crisis

- **Nurses are at a higher risk for drug addiction**
- **Chemically dependent nurses exist in all areas of nursing**

Risk Factors for Substance Misuse Among Nurses

- **Strong need to care for others**
- **Family history of alcohol problems**
- **Education regarding effects of medication**
- **Accessibility to drugs**
- **Pharmacologic optimism**

Risk Factors for Substance Misuse Among Nurses

- Minimal reporting of impaired behaviors
- Lack of identification of dependency problem
- Role strain

Causes of Substance Misuse

- Loss of control
- Development of a compulsion or craving for a mood altering substance in an attempt to regain control
- Distortion in cognitive and emotional functioning
- Belief in efficacy of drug
- Denial of problem

The Most Dangerous Addictive Drugs

- Cocaine/Crack
- Ecstasy
- Ritalin
- Hallucinogens
- Marijuana
- Stadol
- Inhalants
- Ultram
- Methamphetamine
- Crystal Meth

Physical Symptoms of the Nurse in Crisis

- Shakiness
- Tremors
- Slurred speech
- Watery eyes
- Constricted/dilated pupils
- Diaphoresis

Physical Symptoms of the Nurse in Crisis

- Unsteady gait
- Runny nose
- Nausea/vomiting/diarrhea
- Weight loss/gain
- Change in grooming
- Track marks

Behavioral Symptoms of the Nurse in Crisis

- Mood swings
- Inappropriate laughter
- Fatigue
- Hyperactivity
- Depression
- Inability to concentrate
- Blackouts

Behavioral Symptoms of the Nurse in Crisis

- Accidents
- Problems in relationships
- Physical ailments
- Insomnia
- Inappropriate number calls at work
- Agitation
- Withdrawal

Occupational Patterns of the Nurse in Crisis

- Difficulty completing assignments
- Unacceptable performance
- Poor documentation
- Medication errors
- Unexplained absences

Symptoms of Amphetamine Misuse

- Dilated pupils
- Dry mucous membranes
- Excessive sweating and shakiness; increased heart rate, metabolism, rapid or irregular heart beat, heart failure
- Reduced or loss of appetite

Symptoms of Amphetamine Misuse

- Lack of sleep, insomnia
- Talkativeness, but conversation often lacks continuity; changes subjects rapidly
- Unusual energy, accelerated movements and activities, nervousness, insomnia

Symptom of Opiate Misuse

- Pinpoint pupils
- Respiratory depression and arrest
- Drowsiness, confusion, sedation,
- Nausea and vomiting, constipation
- Apathy and decreased physical activity

Symptom of Opiate Misuse

- Short lived euphoria or feeling good effects
- Alert to drowsy
- Coma or death (result of overdose)
- Staggering gait (heroin)

Symptoms of Alcohol Misuse

- More irritable with patients and colleagues
 - Withdrawn, mood swings
- Isolated
- Elaborate excuses for behavior such as being late for work
- Black-outs
 - Complete memory loss for events, conversations, phone calls to colleagues

Symptoms of Alcohol Misuse

- Euphoric recall of events
- Does minimal work necessary
- Difficulty meeting schedules & deadlines
- Illogical or sloppy charting
- Increasingly absent from duty with inadequate explanations; long lunch hours, sick leave after days off

Costs of Substance Misuse

- Costs to agency include
 - Sick time
 - Absenteeism
 - Decreased productivity
 - Cost of recruiting, hiring, and training new staff

Costs of Substance Misuse

- Costs to the individual include
 - Loss of licensure
 - Loss of income
 - Loss of health benefits
 - Legal costs
 - Health risks associated with addiction

Patient Impact

- Neglect
- Risk of injury
- Breach of confidentiality
- Possible death

Co-Worker Impact

- Increased work load
- Risk of injury
- Lost of trust or confidence in co-worker
- Poor appraisal of projects or work that requires teamwork
- Decreased continuity of care

Agency Impact

- Risk of litigation
- Possible federal fines for breach of HIPPA
- Increased insurance cost
- Increased cost of replacing impaired nurse
- Patient injury judgment cost
- Poor agency image/perception
- Decrease ability to serve the public's health needs

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