

Distinguish between substance use, abuse, and dependence.

At what point do you move the diagnosis into a more serious category? What symptoms would you see in someone who is alcohol dependent? Someone who abuses cocaine? Someone who is dependent upon marijuana or methamphetamines? Here are some thoughts to ponder on.

What is meant by use, misuse, abuse, addiction and dependency?

Use is defined as the act of using something for a purpose; to do something habitually; to expend or consume something, often until none is left; to consume something regularly, especially drugs or alcohol; and to benefit or get satisfaction from something (Encarta, 2005). There are two distinctions: recreational use and habitual use.

Substance misuse according to reading and personal experience is not taking a prescribed medication at the proper dosage. Examples are opiates taken for the high rather than for their pain relieving properties or taking medicines more often than prescribed (i.e.: prescribed 2 tablets every 4 hours...misuse is taking 4 tablets every 2 hours). (Encarta, 2005).

Substance use becomes substance abuse when alcohol or drug use is harmful to the health of the individual as well as the health of others. Abuse is used to describe a pattern that leads to significant problems or trouble Causing marked distress in social and / or occupational areas as well as health. (driving while under the influence), substance-related legal problems, or continued substance use that interferes with friendships and or family relationships. As a disorder, substance abuse refers to the abuse of illegal substances or the abusive use of legal substances, the overindulgence in and dependence on a stimulant, depressant, chemical substance, herb (plant) or fungus leading to effects that are detrimental to the individual's physical health or mental health, or the welfare of others, and dependency or addiction (Wikipedia, 2006). Alcohol is the most common legal drug of abuse. (Encarta, 2005).

Addiction is a primary, chronic, relapsing, neurobiological disease with genetic, psychosocial, and environmental factors affecting its development. Manifestations include compulsive drug seeking behavior and abuse causing long-lasting chemical changes in the brain. One or more of the following characterizes addiction: impaired control over drug use, compulsive use, continued use despite harm, craving, and a strong emotional and /or psychological dependence. (Fields)

Dependency is defined as a lack of independence or self-sufficiency. In the case of chemical dependency there is such a strong reliance on the substance that it becomes necessary to have this substance just to function properly. The need of a substance is developed from abusing it, which leads to a requirement of the substance for survival (Wikipedia, 2006). Signs of dependency include: increased tolerance or need for increased amounts of substance to attain the desired effect, withdrawal symptoms with decreased use, unsuccessful efforts to decrease use, increased time spent in activities to

obtain substances, withdrawal from social and recreational activities, and continued use of substance even though physical or psychological problems are continually encountered. (DSM) (Fields)

One widely accepted standard is the diagnosis of a substance abuse or dependence disorder as defined by the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). According to APA's definition, substance abuse refers to a pattern of recurrent adverse consequences related to substance use. Substance dependence refers to a pattern of substance use where adverse consequences are accompanied by physical or psychological dependence on a substance.

Diagnostic criteria for dependency?

When a person with profound emotional or mental need to repetitively use a drug or a certain class of drugs is referred to as being psychologically dependent upon these drugs. We may see this more in cocaine and cannabis abusers. Whereas the alcoholic, methamphetamine or benzo user may display much higher level of physical need and withdrawal. The user becomes preoccupied with taking the drug to reach the optimal level of functioning to maintain a sense of well being it becomes difficult to stay at this level. (Fields, Richard. 2004) The altered state that develops when a person cannot stop taking a certain drug without going through withdrawal is defined as a physical dependence. (Fields, Richard. 2004)

The differences between psychologically dependent and physical dependence is a person who is psychologically dependent is preoccupied with taking the drug to reach his/her optimal high, and person who is physically dependent continues to take the alcohol or drug to avoid a negative consequence or withdrawal. Zuckerman states (pg 273) although cocaine and heroin are said to be drugs to produce dependence, but a study comparing daily use showed a smaller percentage of cocaine users ever felt the dependence of other users such as alcohol and heroin users. Only 13% of the cocaine users Zuckerman stated ever reported feeling withdrawal compared to the 75% of heroin users. Cocaine users particularly crack users, showed more distress, depression, temper, suspicious behavior, hallucinations and violent outburst compared to heroin users. (Zuckerman)

The DSM reflects the following criteria for Abuse and Dependency:

Dependence- (3 or more in a 12-month period)

- Tolerance (marked increase in amount; marked decrease in effect)
- Characteristic withdrawal symptoms; substance taken to relieve withdrawal
- Substance taken in larger amount and for longer period than intended
- Persistent desire or repeated unsuccessful attempt to quit
- Much time/activity to obtain, use, recover
- Important social, occupational, or recreational activities given up or reduced

- Use continues despite knowledge of adverse consequences (e.g., failure to fulfill role obligation, use when physically hazardous) (DSM)

Abuse (1 or more in a 12-month period)

- Symptoms must never have met criteria for substance dependence for this class of substance.
- Recurrent use resulting in failure to fulfill major role obligation at work, home or school
- Recurrent use in physically hazardous situations
- Recurrent substance related legal problems
- Continued use despite persistent or recurrent social or interpersonal problems caused or exacerbated by substance (DSM)

References

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