How to Talk with Patients about Substance Use and Viral Hepatitis

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Disclosures

• I have no financial conflicts of interest.
Learning Objectives

• Understand common myths related to addiction and potential harms related to these myths

• Describe how language impacts stigma and ways to decrease stigmatization in oral and written communication

• Describe a patient focused approach towards screening and treatment of patients with HCV who have a substance use disorder
Myths about Addiction

- **Myth: Addiction is a matter of choice and can be overcome with will power**
  - Social situations and policy both have an impact on likelihood of developing a substance use disorder
  - People from disenfranchised backgrounds have a different response to dopamine reinforcement that impacts susceptibility to substance use disorder
  - Will power is essential but not sufficient for change – John Norcross
    - Changing environments, healthy alternatives, reward contingency, healthy relationships

Myths about Addiction

• Myth: Because people may return to use or continue to use substances following treatment, treatment does not work
  • Substance use disorders are treatable chronic illnesses
    • Only 1 in ten people with an SUD will access treatment
    • Multiple treatment episodes and modalities may be needed prior to finding an effective treatment
      • This is an expected course for a chronic illness and not a personal failure of an individual or a sign that treatment is ineffective
Myths about Addiction

• Myth: If people really wanted to stop, they could
  • Loss of control is a factor in the disease process
  • This puts the onerous on the individual person rather than in the environmental, social and political context
  • Ambivalence is a normal part of the change process
Stigma and Substance Use Disorders

• Sources of stigma
  • Family
    • Shame, fear, lack of knowledge
  • Media
    • Often motivated by sensationalism
  • Healthcare
    • Overdose deaths are rising faster among Black than White Americans
    • Black patients are 20-50% less likely as White patients to initiate MOUD
• Policy
  • Punitive policies historically and currently disproportionately impact communities of color
## Words Matter Campaign: National Institute on Drug Addiction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NON-STIGMATIZING LANGUAGE</th>
<th>STIGMATIZING LANGUAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Person with a substance use disorder</td>
<td>- Substance abuser or drug abuser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Babies born with an opioid dependency</td>
<td>- Addicted babies/Born addicted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Substance use disorder or addiction</td>
<td>- Drug habit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Use, misuse</td>
<td>- Abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Risky, unhealthy, or heavy use</td>
<td>- Problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Person in recovery</td>
<td>- Clean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Abstinent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Not drinking or taking drugs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Treatment or medication for addiction</td>
<td>- Substitution or replacement therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Medication for Opioid Use Disorder/Alcohol Use Disorder</td>
<td>- Medication-Assisted Treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Positive, negative (toxicology screen results)</td>
<td>- Clean, dirty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Grayken Center for Addiction, 2017
Impacts of Stigma and Language

• Mass General study comparing health professionals views on a clinical vignette in which the term “person with a substance use disorder” was compared to “substance abuser”
  • Substance abuser: more likely to describe the situation as a moral issue or law enforcement issue
  • Person with a substance use disorder: more likely to recommend therapeutic interventions

Patient Centered Approach to HCV Screening and Evaluation

Motivational Interviewing
- Motivation comes from the client, not from outside sources
- Ambivalence cannot be resolved through direct persuasion
- Counselors use reflective listening & pointing out discrepancy
- Readiness to change is a fluctuating result of interpersonal interaction, not a trait

Clinical work up
- Screening labs:
  - HIV
  - HCV
  - STI including syphilis
  - TB
- Immunizations
  - HBV
  - HAV
  - Tetanus
  - Influenza/covid
Questions?