

Psycho-Education for Patients and Family Members

Session 12: Opioids and Club Drugs

The Importance of Total Abstinence

- Abstinence from all substances that affect the brain—even alcohol—greatly increases the chances of a successful recovery.

Questions:

- *What do you know about opioids?*
- *What do you know about heroin?*

What Are Opioids?

- Examples of opioids are:
 - Heroin (natural opioid)
 - Morphine (natural opioid)
 - Meperidine (synthetic opioid)
 - Oxycodone (synthetic opioid)
- Opioids act on the brain's opiate receptors.
- Opioids dull pain and relieve anxiety that comes from thinking about pain.
- People abuse opioids because they provide a feeling of euphoria (a “rush”).

Physical Effects of Opioids

- Taking opioids causes
 - Constricted pupils
 - Flushing of the skin
 - Heavy feeling in the limbs
- The rush is followed by a confused, drowsy feeling that lasts several hours.
- Breathing and heart rate slow during this period.

Question:

- *What is “tolerance” to drugs?*

Opioids and Tolerance

- Higher and higher doses are required to achieve the opioid's effects. This is called "tolerance."
- Eventually, the drug is taken mainly to prevent withdrawal, not to get high.

Question:

- *What are “dependence” and “addiction” on drugs? How are they different?*

Dependence and Addiction on Opioids

- Repeated use of opioids can result in dependence and addiction.
- “Dependence” causes withdrawal symptoms to the person’s body when he/she stops using a drug.
- “Addiction” is characterized by craving for the drug and using it even when it causes harm.
- People who use opioids as prescribed to relieve pain may develop dependence but rarely become addicted.

Withdrawal From Opioids

- Withdrawal occurs when someone who is dependent stops taking opioids suddenly.
- Withdrawal symptoms: severe muscle and bone pain, trouble sleeping, diarrhea, vomiting, and cold flashes.
- Withdrawal can take up to a week to run its course.
- Withdrawal from opioids can be fatal, but a death rarely happens to healthy adults.

Abuse of Prescription Opioids

The main prescription opioids people abuse are:

- Morphine
- Meperidine
- Nalbuphine (Nubain)

Heroin

- Heroin is a white to dark brown powder.
- It often is mixed with other substances (sugar, starch) or poison (strychnine).
- It is smoked, snorted or injected.
- Heroin users starting out smoking or snorting often progress to injection.

Heroin

Dangers

- The need to purchase and use heroin causes people to ignore other aspects of their lives, like family and loved ones, finances, and legal concerns.
- This neglect can lead to weight loss, sickness, money problems, criminal activity, and housing and family problems.
- Overdose is a persistent danger with heroin.

Heroin

Disease Risks

- Injection drug use is linked to HIV cases and hepatitis C cases.
- Injecting heroin can lead to:
 - Collapsed veins
 - Clogged blood vessels
 - Bacterial infections of the heart and blood vessels
 - Pneumonia
 - Tuberculosis
 - Liver or kidney disease

Question:

- *What do you know about club drugs?*

What Are Club Drugs?

- Club drugs include a variety of drugs used at bars and dance parties, especially by high school and college students.
- Examples of club drugs are:
 - MDMA (“Ecstasy”)
 - LSD
 - Ketamine
 - GHB
 - Rohypnol
- Many people wrongly believe club drugs are safe.

MDMA or “Ecstasy”

- Ecstasy causes increased heart rate and blood pressure, nausea, loss of appetite, jaw tightness, and teeth clenching.
- Ecstasy also produces increased energy, desire for visual stimulation, and heightened awareness of and response to sensory input.
- After an initial rush, people experience calm, positive feelings lasting 3-6 hours.
- Ecstasy can raise the body temperature to dangerous levels (42 degrees C).
- Ecstasy kills nerve cells in the brain.
- Studies show that the damage can last at least 7 years.