

Background of drug abuse and addiction

People consider drug abuse and addiction as a very serious social problem, people who take drugs are characterized as weak, and have a very strong criminal tendency, and it is their belief that drug abusers and addicts will only be able to stop taking drugs as long as they are able and are very much willing to change their behavior. This myth have stigmatized and stereotyped not only the drug users but their family as well, it also affects the drug users community as well as the people who work with these individuals. Drug addiction and drug abuse really represents a major health problem that affects a lot of people from all walks of life. It is a problem that has a very wide range of social consequences.

Addiction begins with drug abuse when one makes a very conscious effort or choice to use drugs, however please remember that addiction is not just a lot of drug use. Scientific studies and research show that drugs, not only affects and interfere with normal brain function, it also creates a powerful feeling of pleasure and will also have a long term effect on brain metabolism and activity and at some point during the drug abuse, changes will occur in the brain that has a possibility that will turn drug abuse into addiction, as well as a chronic relapsing illness. Drug addicts suffer from a very compulsive drug craving and usage that they can no longer quit by themselves, thus treatment is already necessary to end this compulsive behavior.

Introduction : Drug abuse among health care professionals

The work of health care professionals places them at risk for both physical and mental health problems as studied by Higgins in 1995. Problems associated with drug use and alcohol is most likely to be developed by this people, the same study show (Birch et al, 1998) that it is common for doctors at the early stages of their career tend to drink heavily and about two thirds of the recently qualified doctors, has exceeded the recommended safe drinking limits, while there

are 10 percent that are drinking at a very hazardous level, and in addition the same study show that a quarter of the doctors used on the said study uses cannabis while 10 percent were using hallucinogens. A study conducted by the British Medical Association in 1998 showed that one in every 15 doctors may be affected by drug dependence problem at some point of their career, Although more is known about alcohol misuse among doctors, other people working as health care professionals is also very much at risk in developing drug problems.

Reasons why drug addiction is prevalent among health workers :

Several reasons why health care professionals and doctors are at risk of drug addiction and alcohol misuse some of the reasons are identified as, : The long years of medical training are characterized by intense competition, fear of failure , excessive workload and a few occupations faces the intense stress experienced in the practice of medicine leads doctors to fall to drugs and alcohol abuse. In addition doctors, nurses and others who works in a medical settings, have a easy access and knowledge to many types of drugs, thus the misuse of this substance by these health workers or health care professionals may begin or start with an innocent or legitimate reasons such as insomnia, dispersion or back pain, this is aggravated when these health professionals decides to choose to diagnose and treat themselves and these is done in appropriately most of the time. This occur since this health workers have heightened sense of self sufficiency and tendency to minimize the severity of their problems, delays the identification of the problems by themselves or by their colleagues. Another reason is embarrassment at meeting colleagues as patients and with issues of confidentiality and concerns about the risk of their careers due to substance abuse. This and other factors are creating obstacles for this people, the health care professionals in obtaining access to health care services thus increasing the probability of this health care professionals being dependent on drug and other substance.

Substance abuse among health care professionals:

The number one problem in America, is called substance abuse, it does not discriminate across gender, socio economic status and age. Some types of substance abuse however are prevalent among particular groups. A classic example for instance is that in the use of illicit drugs, in all age groups except for people from 12 to 17 years. It is greater among Africans – Americans as compared to either Caucasians and Hispanics, and men are more than four times more likely to be heavier alcohol users than women and that proportion of drinkers in the family rises with the family income.

Overall , prevalence of substance abuse , disorders in health care professionals is about equal as compare to that of the general populace. Health care professionals in fact as compared to certain occupations such as roofers and house painters, have a slightly lower rate of drugs or substance abuse. Among health care workers however is was found out that there is a much higher use of prescription drugs and Benzopidiapines, as compared to the general population (Welsh 2002).

Conclusion :

The issue of drugs and substance abuse among health care professionals is very complex, while it is believed to be greater in the general public, the problem it poses nonetheless is representing a very grave danger to patient safety. Evidence show that substance or drug abuse specially among doctors or nurses will start and begin in their school thus more education is needed to alert students, to this issues and once in the workplace, barriers to communication can prevent substance abuse among health workers.

The challenge posed to health care leaders to prevent substance abuse are as follows :

1. They should develop new methods of research for the collection of reliable statistical data regarding drug and substance abuse in order for this to be accurately addressed and eventually controlled.
2. They should identify all types of workers that are at risk of substance abuse and they should also investigate the importance of stress as a contributing factor to this type of abuse.
3. Leaders should educate healthcare workers early and provide them with continuing education throughout their careers regarding substance abuse and drug addiction.
4. Leaders should provide a supportive and open environment for the workers who are dealing with substance abuse either by themselves or by others.

In closing , health care professionals as a group that is involved with substance or drug abuse, truly deserves investing on, it is really very important that they be given access to treatment that can assure confidential and trustworthy channels, which can respond swiftly to crises when they arise. It is strongly recommended that for effective treatment of substance abuse for these health workers, early identification of substance abuse for this group of people should be acted on and intervened immediately. With this actions taken we can be assured that the danger and concerns for patient safety can totally be eliminated.

References :

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