Overview of Substance Abuse

Psychology 470
Introduction to Chemical Addictions
Steven E. Meier, Ph.D.

Listen to the audio lecture while viewing these slides

Psychoactive Drugs

- Influences many things within an individual
  - Emotions
  - Thought
  - Behavior
  - Physiology

Problem

- Substance Abuse also influences society as well
  - Crime
  - Domestic violence
  - HIV/AIDS/STDs/Hepatitis
  - Educational quality
- Costs society billions of dollars in related costs
  - Insurance
  - Judicial/Corrections
  - Medical costs covered by taxpayers

Examples of Problems Legal Drugs Cause

- Smoking
  - Nicotine
- Alcohol
  - DUI
  - Domestic Violence
- Rape
- Other Violence

Progression of use

- Friends usually start your use
- Begin recreationally
- Build tolerance
  - Need more and more of the drug to get the same effect
- Develop a substance abuse problem
  - Causes problems to self, family or society
- Moves into substance dependence
  - Must have the drug to function
  - Withdrawal
  - Etc.

Why Use?

- Feels good
- Relive tension and anxiety
- Reduce stress
- Peer pressure
- Relieve pain
  - physiological
  - Psychological
- Part of religious experiences
Some Factors for Determining Drug Use

- Cultural factors
- Societal
- Sub Group factors
- Context
- Pharmacological

DSM IV

- Different levels
  - Substance Intoxication
  - Substance Abuse
  - Substance Dependence

Two Key Symptoms for Abuse or Dependence

- Substance Tolerance
  - Need more and more of the drug to get the same effect
- Substance Withdrawal
  - You experience symptoms opposite of the drug's effect when drugs are not in your body
  - Stimulants - you experience lethargy
  - Depressants - you experience stimulation

Withdrawal

- Is a major reason for continued use
  - Negative reinforcement
    - Escape from negative symptoms
    - Avoid unpleasant symptoms
  - Result - use continues

Example Methamphetamine

- Using - makes you feel more alert, stimulated, etc
- Withdrawal
  - Feel lethargic, depressed, down
  - Just cannot seem to get going
  - Feel weird
- Result
  - Use again, makes you feel "normal"

Tolerance

- Is extremely important
  - Makes you need more of the same drug to make you feel good
  - Example - Alcohol
    - Early users - 1-2 beers feeling really high
    - Middle users - need 5-6 beers
    - Later users - Can drink 12 or more beers
  - Problem
    - Health related effects
    - Reaction time problems
    - Withdrawal occurs when drug is not in the system
Dimensions of Drug Use and Abuse

• Is based on a continuum
• Dep. Rec. Users Exper. Non-Users
• Drugs may be legal or illicit

Some Drugs Categories of Use and Abuse

• Can be legal and/or illegal
  • Stimulants
  • Hallucinogens
  • Depressants and Benzodiazepines
  • Opiates
  • Inhalants and solvents
  • Analgesics
  • Steroids

Some Other Drug Terms

• Gateway drugs
• Over the Counter (OTC)
• Designer/Synthetic drugs

Conclusions

• Lots of compounds
• Lots of issues
• Use is influenced by lots of variables.
• Potential for abuse is influenced by lots of variables.