

Substance Use Disorder

This disorder hits home for me. I have spent more time researching this topic than any other disorder I have ever written about. I have personally experienced what substance abuse has done to some of the people close and dear to me.

Substance abuse is a disorder that plagues many people worldwide and causes significant problems and distress for many Americans. This disorder is recognized as a medical brain disorder. Addicts use drugs that are usually illegal, such as marijuana, heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine. However, the misuse of legal substances such as alcohol, nicotine, and prescription medicines, also, contributes to the substance use disorder plaguing our country today. Alcohol is the most common legal drug associated with the disorder.

People with Substance Use disorder may also have other mental health issues. Though people might have both a substance use disorder and a mental disorder, that does not mean that one caused the other. When someone has substance use disorder and another mental health disorder, it is usually better to treat them at the same time rather than separately. It is essential that the provider tailor treatment, which may include behavioral therapies and medication, to an individual's specific combination of disorders and symptoms. It should consider the person's age, misused substance, and the specific mental disorder. Talk to your health care provider to determine what treatment may be best for you or your loved ones and give the treatment time to work.

Clinical trials are research studies that look at new ways to prevent, detect or treat diseases and conditions. The goal of clinical trials is to determine if a new test or treatment works and is safe. Although individuals may benefit from being part of a clinical trial, participants should be aware that the primary purpose of a clinical trial is to gain new scientific knowledge so that others may be better helped in the future. Researchers at NIMH and around the country conduct many studies with patients and others. We have new and better treatment options today because of clinical trials and what they uncover. Talk to your health care provider about clinical trials, their benefits, risks and whether one is right for you or your loved ones.

Of all the disorders I have researched and written about, Substance Use Disorder is one of the very few illnesses that lack the understanding and knowledge to fight and control this deadly disease. However, we do know the symptoms and behaviors of drug use may include the following.

- Confusion
- Continuing to use drugs
- Episodes of violence
- Hostility when confronted about drug dependencies
- Lack of control over drug abuse
- Making excuses to use drugs
- Need for daily or regular drug use to function

Not caring about physical appearance

Secretive behavior to hide drug use

Using drugs even when alone

To find mental health treatment services in your area, call Substance Abuse and Mental Services Administration National Helpline at 1 800 662 4357.

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