Health Information Technology

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In today’s society, substance abuse is a continuously growing concern. Substance use disorder is a disease that affects both the brain and behavior of the individual who has a dependence on a substance. Commonly abused substances are alcohol, nicotine, legal or illegal drugs, or even caffeine. In the early stages of abuse, signs can be easily overlooked by loved ones. Neglecting work, changes in behavior, and changes in sleep patterns are commonly seen. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, there were 99,000 substance-related deaths in the United States alone. Compared to previous years, this was a nearly 30% increase in overdoses. Addicts will use abusable substances in an attempt to relieve anxiety and depression symptoms. Individuals who abuse substances cause destruction not only to themselves but to their family and friends as well. Resources to help abusers, families, and friends should be easily accessible. The significance of this disease can lead to a life-or-death situation. In this generation, the first-place people will turn to for help is the internet. Simple Google searches can lead to thousands of websites offering information and help. Entire library collections are available at the user’s fingertips and are formatted to be printable (McGonigle and Mastrian, 2022).

Abstaining from abused substances is a major challenge, however, preventing relapses proves to be the biggest factor in abstinence. A study completed in November of 2021 showed evidence that relapse rates of alcohol and substance use disorders vary between 40% to 60% within the following year of leaving a treatment facility (Erdogan et al., 2021). It was also found that individuals struggling with addiction had a higher chance of relapse if they had a relative who also struggles with addiction (Erdogan, 2021). Risk factors for increasing severity include occupational status and who the person lives with (Erdogan, 2021). The study effectively shows that the importance of patient communication within family environments and the view of relatives toward addiction can have an influence on treatment and relapse (Erdogan, 2021). Individuals living with chronic diagnoses such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, psychosis are also more likely to abuse substances in effort to escape their reality (Alozai and Sharma, 2023). Another barrier is the lack of insurance companies readily available to ensure treatment facilities are compensated for their services. This issue prevents many who are struggling from finding and receiving the help that is needed. Substance abuse should be faced head-on within the family environment and patient-physician relationship with honest and open-minded communication. Providers will be able to better manage interventions, treatments, referrals, and assessments of patients who have a willingness to change (Wu and Baker, 2023)

This website was formed using Wix website creator with myself, Chrissy, and Erica working to combine our knowledge to make an easily accessible website for the general population. Overall, the Wix site was user-friendly and used a drag-and-drop builder. It also allowed us to create and name our own domain. One of the challenging aspects of this project was finding scholarly sources to support our information. There were very few that focused on what substance abuse actually is and how to get help. For the most part, the sources focused on the complications that can accompany substance abuse such as intimate partner violence, child abuse/neglect, and sexually transmitted infections. We started creating the website by brainstorming website names that would pop up with simple Google searches including words like “addiction”. Next, we chose a font and used vocabulary based on a 4th-grade reading level to make the website more inclusive to individuals with a lesser education status. We included links describing what substance abuse is, the harmful effects of substance abuse, and resources readily available and free to use anonymously. The website contains 6 pages of information. Internal links are included within the website and contain information about substance abuse and how it can impact mental health. Our target audience of users includes adolescents to older adults searching for helpful resources for themselves or family members who have fallen into a life of addiction. The theme of the website is freedom, breaking chains from a life holding them down and preventing a healthy and happy life. We tried to include truthful graphics and information while conveying the message that life without addiction could be more freeing compared to the life being lived now.

In conclusion, substance abuse will continue to be an issue in today’s society if it is not taken seriously by not only the general population but also by politicians and healthcare providers as well. Currently, nicotine, alcohol and opioids are the only abused substances with FDA-approved medications treatments (Jahan and Burgess, 2023). 11% of Americans have reported that they used online technology to change their substance use or aid in their recovery (10 Things We’ve Learned from the National Recovery Study, 2023).

References

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