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ADDICTION BURDEN AND RESOURCES FOR PATIENTS IN CONNECTICUT

Jacob Reynolds

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Problem Identification and description of Need

National Problem

- ▣ 60 million smokers, 14 million dependent on alcohol, 14 million illicit drug users, 1/4 of Americans over 15 has physiologic dependence on at least one addictive substance
- ▣ 1/4 of all deaths in the US are caused by addictive substances: alcohol, tobacco, drugs
- ▣ 40 million injuries and illnesses per year

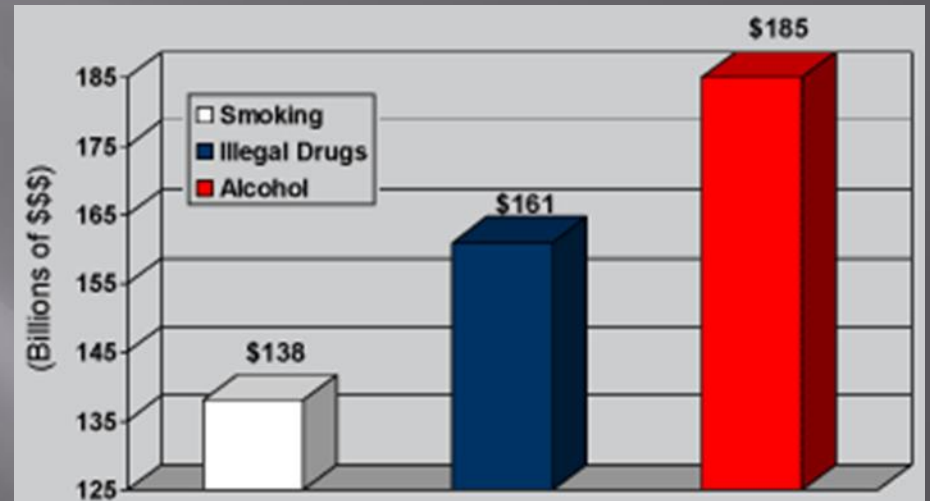
Local Problem

- ▣ One therapist alone has sent 30 of her patients under age 22 to in-patient treatment for opiate abuse.
- ▣ “ [There is] increasing child abuse associated with substance abuse by a primary caregiver. Some 70 percent of families in our protection service caseload have substance abuse as either a contributing factor or the cause of abuse and neglect.” -CT Department of Children and Families
- ▣ “About 10 to 15% of my patients have the co-morbid condition of addiction in some form.” -Local Family Medicine Physician

Public Health Cost Nationwide and CT

Nationally

- Approximately 400 billion in health care costs, lost worker productivity, and crime.
- In 1997, illicit drug users were more likely than others to have missed 2 or more days of work in the past month and to have worked for three or more employers in the past year.



Total cost in dollars

Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse

Public Health Impact on CT

- ▣ “An increasing number of teens are dying from the scourge of prescription drugs, particularly opiates that mimic heroin.” - Local Newspaper 2014 article.
- ▣ In one Connecticut based study, 24,000 caregivers of children completed an initial evaluation of their substance abuse problem.
- ▣ “Prescription drug use in Connecticut now kills more people under the age of 34 than car crashes.”

Community perspective on issue: Interviews

Interview 1: Dr. [Name Withheld]. Family Medicine Physician in CT

- ❑ He stated that his patients with addiction are less compliant with treatment of any illness they may have, including their addiction.
- ❑ He notes that addiction as a primary illness results in numerous secondary conditions such as the following: depression, liver toxicity, increased blood pressure and malnutrition to name a few.
- ❑ He tries to use several different resources for the treatment of individuals with addiction including inpatient treatment, outpatient treatment, group meeting like AA, psychiatrists, therapists, and even himself as a primary care provider. Though he acknowledges that there is much more likelihood for success if a patient will meet with someone who has had specific training in addiction treatment.

Community perspective on issue: Interviews

Interview 2: [Name Withheld]. Community member, AmeriCorps member, Youth Health Service Corps Coordinator

- “The biggest issue that I have seen is drug use, specifically prescription drugs. This is affecting all ages from middle school students to the elderly. Parents who are addicted to prescription drugs and are not confronted set an example of tolerance for this addiction and the children start down the same path. Many students in our schools don’t have to look far to access these drugs.”
- Based on his experience he stated the following when asked about the impact of addiction on the health of his community, “People who are addicted tend to be more willing to do anything to get whatever they are addicted to including stealing and causing harm to others. Also, hypodermic needles and other drug paraphernalia could be in places that are unsafe such as playgrounds, parks, and schools.”
- “Obviously, rehab centers are a necessity but also incorporate psychologist and psychiatrists into helping those already addicted. However, as to many problems facing the community, education is the best way to overcome the issue. Educating our youth to help prevent addiction and educating those already addicted to help them from becoming addicts again.”

Intervention and Methods

Primary intervention

- ▣ Hold a seminar discussing addiction, it's impact, and the associated science of addiction at Danbury High School
- ▣ Invite all students by making announcements and passing out flyers throughout the school
- ▣ Share information via powerpoint presentation and Q&A session

Results/Response/Data

- ▣ Results were to be obtained via a survey asking the following questions with options ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”

I have an understanding of the way the brain functions in an individual with addiction

I know the signs and symptoms to look for to help determine if an individual has an addiction

The video clips enhanced my learning and were beneficial

I am aware of treatment resources available to individuals facing addiction

- ▣ Future response could be obtained by interviewing the adolescents in attendance in one month and asking them the following questions:

What are the diagnostic criteria for addiction

What parts of the brain are involved in the development of addiction

Evaluation of Effectiveness

Effectiveness was to be evaluated using the survey described previously

- ▣ however a miscommunication with the teacher I was working with prevented survey distribution.

Future evaluation could be obtained by asking the students what made a lasting impact on them two weeks from the date of the presentation.

- ▣ If students did not remember what resources were available for individuals facing addiction, this could be reiterated, as this was an unfortunately brief part of the presentation

Students could then be asked to explain to a fellow classmate who was not at the original presentation what the important signs and symptoms of addiction are and how addiction is diagnosed

Limitations

This project, though informative, had several limitations

- The availability of local resources for individuals with addiction was covered in the presentation, but this information was not distributed in the form of a pamphlet or other handout, which could have been used by the students to distribute to someone they know who may need help.
- The project only focused on one demographic, namely high school students. Addiction is a problem that affects all age groups and classes of society, so a more far reaching education effort would be more appropriate.
- Due to time constraints, only certain aspects of the disease of addiction could be focused on during the presentation. If more time were allotted, or a multiple day group session were conceivable, more topics concerning addiction could be covered, including the cost of treatment, the origins of addiction education and science, and further details into why addiction can be so difficult to treat.

Recommendations for future Interventions/Projects

Future Projects could focus on one of the aspects of this project which was not fully explored: The availability of resources which make clear where and how treatment could be obtained.

- ▣ For example: A future project could look into making pamphlets available in local high schools so students have an awareness of where they can get immediate help for themselves or a loved one.
- ▣ Another project idea could involve the education of homeless and destitute individuals as to what resources for addiction cessation are available to them despite their limited finances and community exposure.

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