Emerging Trends in Addiction Treatment
1.0 CE NBCC, NAADAC, FCB

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Learning Objectives

- Review and discuss current research on the basic brain physiology of addiction
- Discuss the implications of brain research for alcohol and drug treatment
- Explore treatment approaches including co-occurring disorders, addressing unresolved trauma and holistic coping skills that promote wellness

ASAM Definition of Addiction

- Addiction is a complex brain disease with significant behavioral characteristics.
- Nicotine, alcohol, illicit drugs and controlled prescription drugs all affect the pleasure and reward circuitry of the brain in similar ways.

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ASAM Definition Continued

• Over time, continued use of these substances can physically alter the structure and function of the brain, dramatically affect judgment and behavior and drive a compulsion to obtain and use them, even in the face of mounting negative consequences.

• Growing evidence also points to structural and functional differences in the brain and to genetic factors that may predispose certain individuals to addiction.

Addiction and Brain Research

• Research in the 1970's began to investigate the nature of addiction

• From the 1990's dramatic advances were made about the biobehavioral basis of addictions and improved treatment methods based on scientific research

Actually, the evidence is that drug addiction is a biologically-based disease of the brain
Addiction and Brain Research

- The brain of someone addicted to drugs is a changed brain; it is qualitatively different from that of a normal person in fundamental ways, including gene expression and responsiveness to environmental cues.

- These changes in the brain cause an uncontrollable and compulsive drug seeking behavior and use of drugs.

- Prolonged use of drugs change the brain in fundamental ways

- These changes have long term effects on the brain

Addiction and Brain Research

- Addiction: It's a Brain Disease Beyond a Reasonable Doubt!

- “Addiction should be understood as a chronic recurring illness that requires treatment.” NIDA

- Addiction is now considered a chronic medical problem affecting the brain, similar to hypertension and diabetes
Addiction and Brain Research

Many of the brain changes appear to be related to “positive reinforcement” and cellular adaptation to the presence of a brain rewarding substance.

Behaviors experienced as pleasurable are processed in certain areas of the brain called the brain reward pathway.

The fancy name for this brain area is called the mesocorticolimbic pathway.

Natural Rewards

The brain's reward pathway is necessary for survival since it motivates important activities such as food seeking and eating, mating, and parenting.

- Food
- Water
- Sex
- Nurturing
This is why addicts can’t just quit!

All of these must be considered in developing strategies to effectively treat addiction.

Repeated use of drugs and alcohol saturate the brain’s reward pathway to the point that:

✓ the person becomes conditioned to the intense level of drug-induced pleasure;
✓ the normal level of natural rewards are no longer experienced as very pleasurable, and
✓ after chronic use, the brain’s reward pathway becomes drained so that nothing is pleasurable – not even the drugs!
Contemporary Treatment Approaches

- Treat Co-Occurring Psychiatric Disorder, If Any
- Address Underlying Trauma
- Develop Realistic Coping Skills
- Develop Holistic Life View

Contemporary Treatment Approaches

What Does Science Say About The Best Ways to Treat Drug Addiction?

Three Stages of Healing:
- Treatment
- Recovery
- Self Discovery
Contemporary Treatment Approaches

Stage One: Treatment

I. Assessment
   • Extent
   • Severity
   • Co-Occurring Disorders

II. Stabilization
   • Cessation of Substance Abuse
   • If needed, Detoxification

III. Acute Care
   • Psychosocial
   • Pharmaceutical
   • Co-Occurring

Contemporary Treatment Approaches

Stage Two: Recovery

• Support Services
• Recovery Principles
• Support System

Contemporary Treatment Approaches

Stage Three: Self Discovery

• Self-Care
• Meditation
• Holistic View
Contemporary Treatment Approaches

Case Example 1:
- 41 Year Old Male
- Physician
- Recently Intervened on at Work
- 10 Years of Opioid Use

Contemporary Treatment Approaches

Case Example 2:
- 26 Year Old Female
- Injecting Methamphetamine (often with opioids)
- THC, tobacco
- Uses non-suicidal self harm (drainer)
- Bulimia Nervosa
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Summary

- Inhibitory/Control, Motivation/Drive, Reward/Salience and Memory/Learning are all circuits in the brain involved in addiction and must be considered in effective treatment.

- A critical part of addiction treatment is prevention of relapse behaviors, treatment of psychiatric disorder, if any; addressing traumatic events of childhood & past; help to drop the illusion and develop a realistic viewpoint and learning how to cope with real life.

Summary Continued


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