

Prevention Through Education

Health care providers:

- play a key role in the prevention of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use
- have unique opportunities for prevention education and counseling
- need to stress - women are more sensitive to the effects of alcohol and other substances
- need to inform patients about specific medical complications

The Current State of Services for Substance-Abusing Women

- Ratios of men to women in treatment programs range from 2:1 to 10:1
- Substance abuse is defined, and treatment programs are developed, using the “white male” as the standard
- Women who abuse substances are more likely to use or be referred to other health care settings, particularly mental health treatment services and primary care physicians

Barriers to Accessing Treatment

- Internal Barriers
- Interpersonal Barriers
- System Level Barriers

System Level Barriers Specific to Women

- Different referral patterns
- Lack of women-sensitive treatment programs
- Lack of economic resources
- Inadequate insurance coverage

Initiating Treatment

- Assess need for detoxification
- Establish goals acceptable to patient and provider
- Develop a treatment plan
- Encourage family participation in treatment

When Making A Referral....

- Know community resources
- Often requires a team approach
- Monitor patient through recovery process

Specific Treatment Options

- Detoxification
- Inpatient treatment
- Intensive outpatient treatment
- Outpatient treatment
- Residential treatment
- Methadone maintenance
- Self-help groups
- Non-traditional healing

Women-Oriented Substance Abuse Treatment Programs

Definition:

- delivered in a setting compatible with women's interactional style
- women on staff, female role models
- recognizes gender roles, female socialization, and women's status in society
- does not exploit women
- addresses women-specific treatment issues
- offers treatment in a safe, supportive environment

Treatment Components

- Broad and comprehensive treatment services
- Treatment for other problems
- Health services
- Family services
- Services for children
- Development of parenting skills and daily living skills
- Development of social roles, positive relationships, and social support
- Development of self-esteem and adaptive coping mechanisms
- Employment/vocational counseling
- Legal assistance
- Women's support groups as aftercare
- Advocacy

Special Populations

Pregnant Women

- Incidence of alcohol and substance abuse in pregnancy has ranged from 0.5% to 25% in various studies
- About 80-85% of female heroin and cocaine addicts are of child-bearing age
- Alcohol and most psychoactive drugs cross the placenta easily
- Effects of alcohol on the fetus are variable

Special Populations

Pregnant Women

Special Treatment Considerations

- Early intervention
- Pregnancy may be viewed as a motivation for recovery
- Late and limited utilization of prenatal care may be indicative of substance abuse
- Many women experience fear, guilt, and shame
- Untreated issues related to physical, sexual, and emotional abuse
- Ambivalence about pregnancy

Special Populations

Pregnant Women

Deterrents to Treatment

- No wide-scale provisions for children
- Mothers may lose income if they go into residential/inpatient treatment
- Fear of reprisal - either in form of criminalization or loss of children

Special Populations

Pregnant Women

Continuum of Care

- Long-term provision of service in support of woman and her family
 - safe housing
 - clothes
 - parenting education
 - employment
 - address issues of domestic violence, abuse, and victimization
- Women who are appropriately linked can be effectively supported to recover and to manage their multiple roles

Special Populations

Pregnant Women

Pharmacotherapies

- Assess pregnancy status and counsel about detrimental effects of drugs on fetal development
- Assess withdrawal effects on pregnancy and balance with potential side effects of pharmacotherapies
- Antabuse
- Methadone
- Non-pregnant women

Special Populations

Pregnant Women

Criminalization During Pregnancy

- Substance abuse during pregnancy considered a form of child abuse
- Criminal charges and child protection interventions more often directed at women of color
- Offer continued, nonjudgmental advocacy for female patients
- Be familiar with state regulations regarding reporting

Special Populations

Elderly Women

- "Hidden" addictions
- Outreach, access, treatment may be more difficult
- May be isolated
- May have a moralistic attitude about drinking and substance abuse
- May be more reluctant to acknowledge their own substance abuse problems
- Diagnosis is often missed by health care professionals

Special Populations

Elderly Women

Special Treatment Considerations

- Maintain an awareness that alcohol and substance abuse problems exist in the elderly
- Use of alcohol, prescription drugs and over-the-counter medications needs to be examined
- Use open-ended questions
- Successful treatment often requires participation of family members
- Consider distance, means of transportation, financial accessibility when considering treatment options

Special Populations

African-American Women

- More likely to abstain from alcohol than Caucasians
- IVDU is a prominent factor in the prevalence of HIV infection in African-American women and children
- Treatment needs to involve consideration of cultural factors

Special Populations

Native-American Women

- Approximately 450 tribes with different customs and about 250 languages
- Barriers to treatment
 - high unemployment rate
 - do not view substances as addictive
 - geographic isolation
 - lack of funding
 - high rate of poverty
 - lack of trust of the majority treatment system
 - may require culturally specific models of treatment

Special Populations

Asian/Pacific-Islander Women

- Important to consider the specific ethnic group, place of birth, generational status, and degree of acculturation
- Prevalence is believed to be low compared to caucasian women

Special Populations

Hispanic/Latina Women

- Importance of recognizing "Hispanic" as a widely heterogeneous group, representing different cultures and ethnic groups
- May be generational differences as well as different degrees of acculturation

Special Populations

Lesbians

- Approximately 10% of the female population; studies suggest that 25-30% have serious problems with alcohol and other drugs
- Factors for increased risk
 - minority group status
 - role of bars
 - lack of services sensitive to the needs of lesbians
- Special treatment considerations
 - acknowledgement
 - maintain a non-judgemental position
 - outreach efforts
 - offer lesbian-only services

Predictors of Treatment Outcome

- Data is scarce - research has examined alcohol with other substances
- Identified risks for persistent drinking
 - sexual dysfunction
 - part-time employment
 - never being married
 - recent depression
 - untreated mental health problems
 - divorce or separation
- Other predictors of treatment success
 - programs dealing with "sex" work and family therapy
 - services for children
 - offering treatment for both alcohol and other drug problems

Do Treatment Outcomes Differ for Women and Men?

- Recent reviews of literature show no differences in length of treatment and abstinence rates
- Specialized treatment programs for women are necessary and probably yield better outcomes
- Recent meta-analysis of 20 alcohol outcome studies
 - women more likely to be abstinent or improved in short-term follow-ups
 - men tended to appear more successful in follow-up of greater than one year
 - findings may play a role in relapse prevention

Improve Access to Treatment

- Educate the general public
- Improve outreach
- Increase knowledge about alcohol and substance abuse problems in women
- Utilize informal referral networks
- Implement routine alcohol and substance abuse screening programs
- Improve availability of services for children
- Increase availability of women-sensitive services