

Behavioral Health and Violence Prevention: The Substance Use Connection

NH Public Health Association

Annual Conference

October 2014

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Violence and Substance Use

Violence, illicit drug use and alcohol misuse are major public health problems that are strongly linked.

Violence and Substance Use

- People who use illicit drugs and/or misuse alcohol are more likely to be the perpetrators of violence than those who do not.
- People who use illicit drugs and/or misuse alcohol are more likely to be the victims of violence than those who do not.

Violence and Substance Use

- It is estimated that in North America:
 - 10.5% of the population uses cannabis
 - 1.3% of the population uses amphetamines
 - 0.8% of the population uses ecstasy
 - 2.4% of the population uses cocaine
 - 0.3% of the population uses heroin
 - 10.8% of the population misuses alcohol

- World Health Organization Drugs and Violence
World Health Organization Alcohol and Violence

Substance Use and Perpetrators of Violence

World Health organization surveys show:

- In Los Angeles 35% of methamphetamine users aged 18-25 had committed violent acts while under the influence of the drug.
- A Memphis survey of victims of domestic violence revealed that 92% of victims described the perpetrator as having used alcohol or drugs prior to the assault and 67% described the use of a combination of alcohol and drugs.
- In Australia, in 25% of assaults against nurses in emergency rooms were under the influence of drugs

Substance Use and Perpetrators of Violence

World Health organization surveys show:

- In Rhode Island, 25% of women arrested for domestic violence reported symptoms consistent with drug abuse or dependence.
- In Pittsburgh, PA, 80% of 19 year olds arrested for selling hard drugs also carried a gun.
- 35% of women reporting domestic violence in the US reported that the perpetrator was under the influence of alcohol.
- 75% of individuals arrested in Russia for homicide were under the influence of alcohol at the time of the offense.

Substance Use and Victims of Violence

World Health organization surveys show:

- In the US, victims of victims of childhood physical or sexual abuse are 1.5 times more likely to use illicit drugs as youths and adults.
- The use of cocaine and heroin by women is associated with experiencing intimate partner violence in ongoing relationships.
- The use of marijuana or hard drugs by women is associated with experiencing intimate partner violence in a new relationship.

Substance Use and Victims of Violence

World Health organization surveys show:

- Experiencing childhood sexual abuse is highly correlated with addiction in adulthood.
- Early onset of alcohol use is associated with increased risk for experiencing sexual assault in adolescence.
- High levels of alcohol consumption is associated with increased risk of experiencing violence.

Substance Use and Domestic Violence

Perpetrators of domestic violence with severe substance use disorders are more likely to:

- Abuse their partners when not under the influence as well as when under the influence
- Demonstrate a high frequency of violence
- Inflict serious injury on their partners
- Sexually abuse their partners
- Be violent outside the home
 - * Perpetrators who are violent outside the home are more likely to inflict serious injury on their partners
- Abuse their children
- Be triggered by seemingly minor events

Substance Use and Domestic Violence

Perpetrators of domestic violence with severe substance use disorders are more likely to be killed by their partners.

Substance Use and Domestic Violence

Increasing severity and frequency of violence is positively correlated with increasing use of alcohol and other drugs.

Substance Use and Domestic Violence

Substance abuse after the completion of domestic violence intervention is highly correlated with a renewed, escalating pattern of violence.

Substance Use and Suicide

The tendency to engage in aggressive and violent behavior is a potentially important risk factor for suicide in individuals who abuse alcohol and other drugs.

Substance Use and Suicide

- In the U.S. alone, suicide kills more than 39,000 people a year.
 - That's the equivalent of more than a death by suicide every 16 minutes.

Substance Use and Suicide

- Individuals with a substance use disorder are 6 times more likely to report a suicide attempt in their lifetime than those without a substance use disorder.*
- Studies of veterans show that veterans with substance use disorders are 2.3 times more likely to die by suicide than those who are not substance abusers
- Women with a substance use disorder are 6.5 times more likely to attempt suicide than those who do not abuse substances.***

Substance Use and Suicide

- Depression is a strong indicator of suicide risk in general.
 - Depressed mood is a strong indicator of suicide risk in persons with substance use disorders.
 - ALCOHOL IS A DEPRESSANT
 - There is a high co-morbidity between mood and substance use disorders.
- Recent heavy drinking in individuals with an alcohol use disorder is highly correlated with increased risk for suicide.*
- Multiple substance use is highly correlated with increased risk for suicide.**

Substance Use and Suicide

- The tendency to engage in violent behavior is a potentially important risk factor for suicide in substance abusers.
 - Up to 75% of those who begin addiction treatment report having engaged in violent behavior.*
- In those seeking treatment for substance use disorders, the perception that they have difficulty in controlling their own violent behavior was associated with a greater likelihood of a prior suicide attempt.**

Substance Use and Suicide

- Individuals who have difficulty controlling their anger may tend to be impulsive and act on impulse without thinking through the potential consequence of their actions.*
- In one recent study of more than 6000 adults who began addictions treatment, those who had committed serious violent acts were more than twice as likely to report multiple suicide attempts. This finding held true even after statistically controlling for demographic characteristics, depression, and past victimization.**

Substance Use and Suicide

- Violence correlates with severe alcohol and other drug misuse/abuse.
- Severe alcohol and other drug misuse/abuse correlates with an increased risk for suicide.
- Therefore, violence may be a proxy indicator of increased risk for suicide in persons with substance use disorders.

Substance Use and Suicide

- Substance use does NOT cause suicide or violence.
 - Substance use is disinhibiting
 - Substance use impairs judgment
 - Substance use results in substance induced myopathy:
 - A person under the influence of alcohol and/or other drugs can only see the options immediately before him/her and the immediate outcome of actions chosen without the ability to recognize potential long-term consequences of choices.

Substance Use and Suicide

- Approximately 90% of individuals who completed suicide met criteria for a mental health disorder
- There is a high rate of comorbidity between substance use disorders and mental health disorders such as anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, and PTSD.

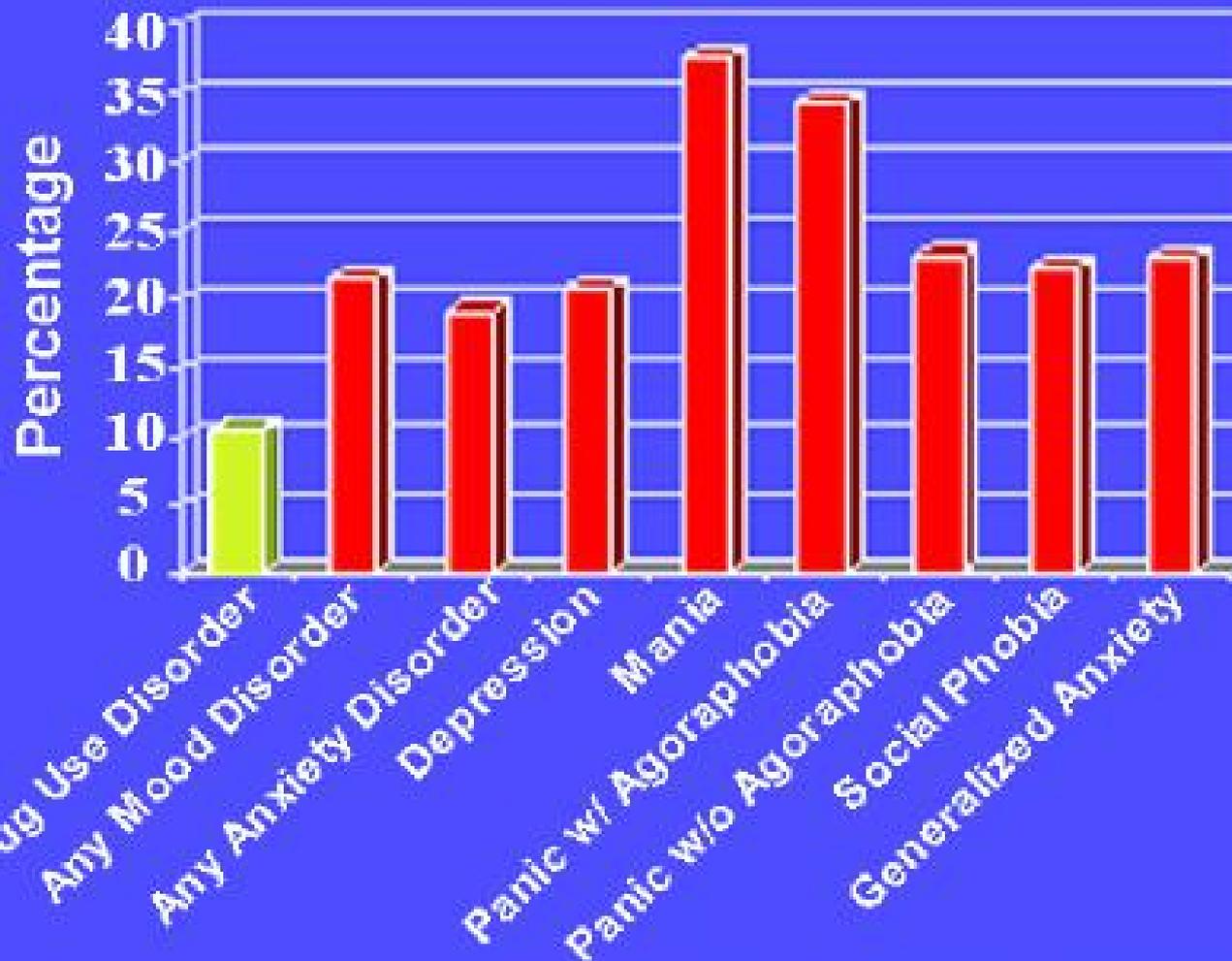
Comorbidity

- Alcohol and other drug abuse can cause symptoms of mental illness.
- Mental illness can result in alcohol and other drug use.
- Both disorders are independent, though they impact each other significantly.

Comorbidity

- Common genetic vulnerabilities may predispose an individual to both substance use and mental health disorders.
- Common environmental factors such as stress, trauma, abuse, early exposure to alcohol and other drugs
 - Especially in those with genetic vulnerabilities.
- Common areas of the brain are involved in both addiction and mental illness.
 - Early onset substance use can alter those areas of the brain and leave them vulnerable to mental illness.
 - Early onset symptoms of mental illness may increase the brain's vulnerability to addiction.

Lifetime Prevalence of Drug Disorders Among Persons With Mood and Anxiety Disorders



Comorbidity

- According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), individuals with co-occurring disorders tend to exhibit more severe symptoms of both disorders than do individuals with a single disorder.

Comorbidity

- All this speaks to the imperative of addressing co-occurring disorders in a holistic and integrated fashion.....

What do we know?

The presence of substance use in a person with mental illness is likely to exacerbate the symptoms of both disorders.

The use of alcohol and other drugs increases the severity and frequency of violent behavior.

The use of alcohol and other drugs increases the risk factors for suicide.

So why do we treat suicidality differently when substance use is involved?

CHAPTER 135-C NEW HAMPSHIRE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES SYSTEM:

Section 135-C:2 :X. "Mental illness" means a substantial impairment of emotional processes, or of the ability to exercise conscious control of one's actions, or of the ability to perceive reality or to reason, when the impairment is manifested by instances of extremely abnormal behavior or extremely faulty perceptions. It does not include impairment primarily caused by: (a) epilepsy; (b) intellectual disability; (c) continuous or noncontinuous periods of intoxication caused by substances such as alcohol or drugs; or (d) dependence upon or addiction to any substance such as alcohol or drugs

So why treat suicide differently when substance use is involved?

- How do you do an accurate differential diagnosis when an individual is under the influence?
- If a person has co-occurring disorders, can you be sure which disorder is causing the suicidal ideation?
- If the immediate suicide crisis passes when a substance user is no longer under the influence, does that mean the suicide risk is gone?
 - If someone becomes suicidal only under the influence of alcohol and/or other drugs, the risk returns when they use again....and they will.

So why treat suicide differently when substance use is involved?

Referring a substance user to substance abuse treatment is not THE answer to dangerousness.

- People enter treatment in crisis.
- People enter treatment at the peak of depressive symptoms.
- People enter treatment when they are losing everything.
- Once someone becomes abstinent, they have to deal with symptoms of mental illness that may have been previously undiagnosed.

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