

Position Statement on Substance Use Disorders

Approved by the Board of Trustees, July 2019

Approved by the Assembly, May 2019

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Issue:

Substance use disorders are widespread among the general public and lead to significant problems for individuals, families, and communities. Psychiatrists have an essential role in the clinical care, research, teaching, and advocacy of issues related to substance use and treating substance use disorders is within the scope of practice of all psychiatrists.

APA Position:

- 1. The diagnosis and treatment of substance use disorders should be recognized as an essential part of medical and psychiatric care. Screening and brief intervention for substance use disorders, which frequently co-occur with other psychiatric disorders, should be a routine part of medical assessment. Patients with identified substance use disorders should be educated about the condition and offered or referred for appropriate treatment.**
- 2. Treatment of substance use disorders is effective, as well as cost-effective, and should be accessible on the same basis as other medical care; treatment for substance use disorders should be covered by all third-party payers on a parity basis with treatments for other diseases. Availability of treatment for substance use disorders should be increased to meet the needs of all patients. Efforts should continue to offer substance use disorders treatment as an alternative to, or as part of, penalties for criminal behavior related to substance use.**
- 3. Treatments for substance use disorders should be based on evidence and empirical studies whenever possible. Effective behavior therapies and medications are needed to address the multiple needs of the individual, and no single treatment is appropriate for everyone.**
- 4. Psychiatry should increase its efforts to ensure adequate training and clinical experience at the medical school, residency, and fellowship levels to develop competence in the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of substance use disorders.**
- 5. Because substance use disorders are disorders of the brain and behavior, psychiatrists should continue to take leadership roles in all areas related to substance use disorders, including prevention, treatment, research, and public policy and continue educating colleagues in various specialties about the nature and treatment of substance use disorders.**
- 6. Co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders are extremely common, and these often complicate and worsen the treatment prognosis of either condition alone. People with**

co-occurring disorders are best served through integrated treatment, and psychiatrists have a vital role in assessing and treating both disorders, leading to better outcomes.

7. Legislative bodies and law enforcement should continue efforts to limit access to substances with a high potential for abuse.
8. Efforts should continue to reduce the advertisement and positive depiction of substance use in media, particularly when youth are likely consumers of the media.
9. Psychiatrists should continue to support further research into the causes, manifestations, treatment, and prevention of substance use disorders, their familial and social consequences, and the cost-effectiveness of efforts directed at prevention, treatment, regulation, and law enforcement.

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