



The Critical Role of Nurses in Addressing Substance Misuse and Addiction: Interventions, Challenges, And Strategies for Improved Care

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Abstract:

Background:

Substance misuse and addiction are widespread public health concerns with considerable social, economic, and health ramifications. Nurses, as primary healthcare practitioners, are essential in tackling these challenges through prevention, intervention, and sustained care. Despite their critical significance, the scope and influence of nursing interventions in addiction treatment are frequently overlooked in clinical practice.

Aim:

This study intends to examine the complex role of nurses in combating substance misuse and addiction, emphasizing their participation in prevention, early detection, direct care, and facilitating recovery. It also analyzes the obstacles encountered by nurses in addiction care and offers suggestions for improving nursing practice in this vital domain.

Methods:

A thorough literature analysis was performed to analyze the existing studies on nursing interventions in substance abuse and addiction. Studies were chosen for their pertinence to nursing practices in addiction prevention, treatment, and recovery. The review encompassed an analysis of nursing education programs focused on substance use disorders.

Results:

The results emphasize that nurses are essential to the effective management of addiction via early screening, medication-assisted treatment (MAT), psychosocial support, and rehabilitation. Stigma, insufficient specialist expertise, and budget constraints were recognized as major obstacles. The research highlights the beneficial effect of proficiently trained nurses on patient outcomes in addiction treatment.

Conclusion:

Nurses have a crucial role in the prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation of those impacted by substance

misuse. Enhancing nurse education and promoting a collaborative, stigma-free healthcare environment are essential for improving addiction treatment delivery.

Keywords:
Nurses, substance abuse, addiction, prevention, intervention, recovery, nursing education, healthcare.

Received: 16 october 2023 **Revised:** 29 November 2023 **Accepted:** 13 December 2023

Introduction

Substance abuse and addiction, frequently used synonymously, denote the persistent dependence on or misuse of substances including alcohol, narcotics, and prescription medications, resulting in considerable physical, psychological, and social dysfunction. Addiction is a complicated, multifaceted condition characterized by physiological dependence and behavioral compulsion. The World Health Organization (WHO) characterizes substance use disorder (SUD) as a medical condition marked by an individual's incapacity to regulate the consumption of detrimental drugs, resulting in negative repercussions across multiple life domains [1]. This definition encompasses both the medical and social aspects of addiction, recognizing its widespread impact on individuals, families, and communities.

The importance of tackling substance abuse and addiction in the healthcare industry is paramount. Nurses, as essential members of the healthcare team, are ideally situated to intervene at pivotal moments in the continuum of care. Their responsibilities encompass prevention, early detection, direct management, and long-term recovery assistance. The Biopsychosocial Model of Addiction highlights the interaction of biological, psychological, and social elements in the emergence and continuation of addiction [2]. (fig1) This paradigm emphasizes the significance of an interdisciplinary approach, with nurses occupying a pivotal role in enabling holistic treatment. Moreover, the Health Belief Model provides insights into how nurses might shape patients' views of addiction and promote treatment involvement via tailored interventions [3].

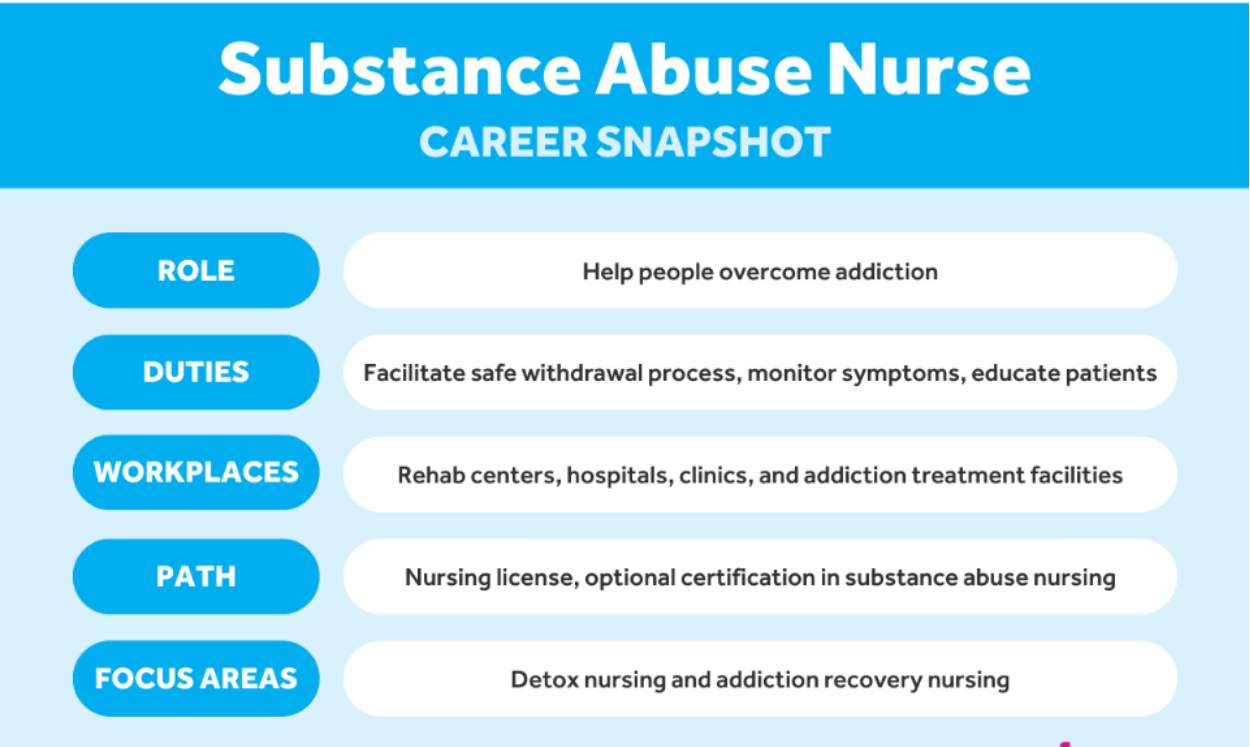


Figure 1 How to Become a Substance Abuse Nurse

Recent advancements in addiction therapy have concentrated on three crucial domains. Advancements in Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) have enhanced results for patients with opioid use disorder, with research indicating its effectiveness in decreasing relapse rates and promoting recovery [4]. Secondly, there is growing acknowledgment of the significance of mental health in addiction, with studies demonstrating

that addressing co-occurring mental health disorders is essential for effective treatment [5]. The incorporation of technology in addiction treatment, especially via telehealth services and mobile health applications, has created new opportunities for patient involvement and ongoing care management [6]. These changes indicate an increasing acknowledgment of the complex nature of addiction and the necessity for creative, patient-centered care strategies.

This study aims to examine the essential function of nurses in combating substance misuse and addiction, emphasizing their participation in prevention, intervention, and recovery efforts. The document is organized as follows: An analysis of nursing responsibilities in addiction prevention and early detection is provided. The direct care interventions administered by nurses in addiction treatment, encompassing medication-assisted therapy (MAT) and psychosocial support, are examined. The research examines the obstacles encountered by nurses in addiction care, encompassing training constraints and stigma. Ultimately, suggestions for advancing nursing practice and optimizing patient outcomes in addiction treatment are presented.

Prevention of Substance Abuse and Addiction

Screening and Early Identification

Nurses are essential in the early identification and prevention of substance abuse and addiction by comprehensive screening and prompt intervention. Timely diagnosis of individuals predisposed to substance use disorders (SUDs) is crucial in preventing the transition from experimental use to chronic addiction. A plethora of evidence-based instruments has been created to aid healthcare professionals in recognizing at-risk individuals. The Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT) and the Drug Abuse Screening Test (DAST) are two of the most prevalent screening tools utilized in clinical practice. Both instruments are intended to detect detrimental substance use and offer a structure for subsequent evaluation and intervention [7]. The AUDIT is a 10-item questionnaire that assesses the frequency and repercussions of alcohol consumption, utilizing a scoring methodology to ascertain the risk level for alcohol use disorder [8]. Likewise, the DAST is designed for substance abuse, providing a systematic method for identifying drug misuse and facilitating early intervention measures.

The significance of prompt intervention in averting the intensification of substance misuse is paramount. Research indicates that early intervention, especially brief interventions by healthcare professionals like nurses, can markedly diminish substance use behaviors and avert the onset of substance use disorders [9]. Nurses proficient in screening methods frequently serve as the initial healthcare providers to engage with patients, allowing them to implement preventive measures prior to the escalation of the condition. Preliminary interventions using motivational interviewing, psychoeducation, and behavioral support have demonstrated efficacy in diminishing substance use among at-risk individuals, thereby enhancing long-term health outcomes [10]. Furthermore, studies have emphasized the crucial period during which early detection and intervention can avert the development of more serious addiction, underscoring the necessity of routine screens in healthcare environments [11].

Patient Education

Patient education is fundamental to addiction prevention, and nurses are distinctly qualified to inform patients about the dangers of substance abuse. Enhancing awareness of the dangers and long-term repercussions of substance use is one of the most effective prevention strategies. Nurses, often delivering care in primary care, emergency, and mental health environments, can facilitate interactions with patients that enhance comprehension of substance use and the adverse physical, emotional, and social repercussions linked to addiction [12]. Nurses can assist patients in making educated decisions and understanding the hazards associated with substance use by delivering realistic information regarding the effects of drugs and alcohol on health. Moreover, nurses can assist patients in identifying early indicators of substance misuse, facilitating timely intervention prior to the progression into addiction [13].

Nurses play a crucial role in educating families and communities about addiction prevention, in addition to providing direct patient education. Studies demonstrate that familial dynamics significantly influence both

the onset and recovery from substance abuse [14]. Nurses can conduct educational sessions for family members to elucidate the intricacies of addiction, identify warning indications of substance consumption, and outline ways for fostering supportive environments for their loved ones. Community outreach is a vital component of substance abuse prevention, and nurses can actively engage in or spearhead initiatives aimed at enhancing public understanding of substance abuse prevention measures. These activities may encompass public health campaigns, educational programs in schools, and community health workshops designed to diminish stigma and motivate individuals to seek assistance when necessary [15]. The capacity of nurses to connect healthcare environments with community-based initiatives positions them optimally to champion prevention among varied groups.

Community Outreach Programs

Community-based outreach programs are crucial for reducing substance abuse, and nurses are integral to the development and implementation of these activities. Substance misuse is both an individual and societal issue, impacting entire communities and contributing to several socioeconomic challenges, such as homelessness, criminal justice participation, and familial dysfunction. Nurses, as frontline healthcare professionals, are particularly positioned to recognize community needs and execute initiatives that tackle the underlying causes of substance dependence. Nurses may engage in community-oriented health education initiatives aimed at substance use prevention, collaborating with public health authorities to convey information regarding the hazards of drugs and alcohol [16].

Nurses furthermore function as leaders and advocates in many community projects focused on enhancing health and well-being. These projects frequently focus on high-risk demographics, including adolescents, individuals with mental health disorders, and those from underprivileged socio-economic situations. Numerous studies have highlighted the efficacy of nurse-led initiatives at educational institutions and community centers that offer substance use education, emotional support, and coping skills for peer pressure and stress [17]. Nurses may also participate in harm-reduction initiatives aimed at mitigating the adverse consequences of substance use, including needle exchange programs and safe environments for individuals with substance use disorders. These programs not only mitigate acute health hazards but also function as essential gateways to sustained addiction recovery for participants.

Through these outreach initiatives, nurses enhance the resilience of communities, enabling them to tackle the socioeconomic causes of addiction. Moreover, community outreach enhances comprehension of addiction, facilitating a transition from a punitive to a more empathetic, health-focused perspective on substance misuse [18]. The involvement of nurses in these initiatives facilitates the connection between healthcare practitioners and the community, guaranteeing that resources and information are accessible to those in greatest need.

Nursing Interventions in Addiction Treatment

Detoxification and Medical Management

Detoxification is an essential initial phase in the treatment of individuals with substance use disorders (SUDs), as it entails the medically controlled elimination of toxic substances from the body. Nurses are essential in overseeing the detoxification process, safeguarding patient safety, and observing withdrawal signs. Detoxification generally encompasses both physical and psychological difficulties, as patients may endure intense withdrawal symptoms that vary from minor discomfort to potentially fatal complications [19]. Individuals detoxing from alcohol may be susceptible to delirium tremens, a potentially lethal disease marked by agitation, confusion, and seizures [20]. Nurses utilize standardized instruments, such as the Clinical Institute Withdrawal Assessment for Alcohol (CIWA-Ar), to evaluate the intensity of withdrawal symptoms, facilitating prompt intervention when required [21].

Nurses are tasked with closely monitoring patients during the detoxification withdrawal stage. This includes routine monitoring of vital signs, evaluating for indications of dehydration, and addressing discomfort and anxiety that may occur during withdrawal. Nurses must remain alert for indications of problems, including seizures, arrhythmias, or respiratory depression, which may necessitate prompt medical care. Moreover,

the management of concurrent medical illnesses in detoxification patients is essential, as numerous individuals with substance use disorders have chronic health difficulties, including liver disease or cardiovascular disorders. Nurses deliver comprehensive care to facilitate safe detoxification, hence reducing the risk of bad outcomes and enhancing the probability of successful recovery [22].

Psychosocial Interventions

In addition to the physical components of addiction therapy, psychosocial therapies are essential for addressing the psychological and emotional issues that contribute to addiction. Nurses frequently serve as the initial healthcare providers to build relationship with patients, placing them in a distinctive position to offer counseling and emotional support during the treatment process. The therapeutic interaction between nurses and patients cultivates trust and establishes a basis for patients to disclose their challenges with substance use [23]. Nurses can utilize diverse psychological therapies, including motivational interviewing, which seeks to enhance the patient's internal drive for behavioral change by addressing ambivalence and reinforcing personal objectives [24]. This method has demonstrated an increased probability of successful recovery by assisting patients in acknowledging their preparedness for change.

Nurses engage with psychologists, counselors, and other multidisciplinary team members to develop personalized treatment plans that address the unique requirements of each patient. This collaborative method guarantees that all dimensions of the patient's health—physical, emotional, and social—are considered throughout the therapy process. A treatment plan may include family therapy, group therapy, or cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) to assist patients in managing cravings, cultivating coping techniques, and restoring connections with loved ones. Nurses offer continuous emotional support to patients and their families, providing information on addiction, recovery, and relapse prevention measures [25]. The integration of psychological therapies into addiction treatment is crucial for fostering long-term recovery and averting relapse.

Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT)

Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) is an evidence-based approach that integrates pharmacological therapy with psychosocial support to facilitate recovery from substance use disorders. Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) has demonstrated efficacy in enhancing treatment results, mitigating relapse risk, and diminishing illicit substance usage. Standard medication-assisted treatment (MAT) choices for opioid use disorder (OUD) are methadone, buprenorphine, and naltrexone, whereas disulfiram, acamprosate, and naltrexone are frequently employed in the management of alcohol use disorder (AUD) [26]. Each of these drugs functions differently, either by alleviating withdrawal symptoms, obstructing the effects of the substance, or diminishing cravings, thereby facilitating patients' participation in recovery and rehabilitation programs [27].

Nurses are essential in the administration of MAT, providing accurate dosing and monitoring patients for possible side effects or adverse reactions. Methadone, if improperly taken, can result in respiratory depression and overdose, necessitating vigilant monitoring [28]. Nurses are tasked with instructing patients on the appropriate utilization of MAT drugs, maintaining compliance with the prescribed regimen, and resolving any questions or misconceptions. Furthermore, they observe for adverse effects including somnolence, gastrointestinal issues, or mood alterations, which may necessitate dosage modifications or a prescription change [29]. Nurses are crucial in promoting continuous patient involvement in the treatment process by evaluating progress, praising positive behaviors, and providing assistance to address any problems that may occur during Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) [30].

The incorporation of MAT within a holistic treatment strategy, alongside psychosocial therapies, increases the probability of successful recovery for persons with addiction. The proficiency of nurses in drug administration, patient education, and monitoring is essential for enhancing the efficacy of MAT and assisting patients in their recovery process. By addressing both the physiological and psychological dimensions of addiction, MAT provides a comprehensive treatment approach that promotes sustained sobriety and enhanced quality of life.

Challenges in Addressing Substance Abuse

Stigma and Misconceptions About Addiction

Substance usage is significantly stigmatized, creating substantial obstacles to the treatment and rehabilitation of individuals with substance use disorders (SUDs). Stigma, characterized by adverse social perceptions and stereotypes directed at individuals with addiction, can impede their motivation to seek assistance and adversely affect the therapeutic rapport between patients and healthcare professionals. The erroneous belief that addiction is merely a moral deficiency or a consequence of poor decisions frequently engenders feelings of guilt and isolation in individuals grappling with addiction [31]. This societal stigma adversely impacts an individual's self-esteem and sense of value, while also affecting their access to therapy, as persons with substance use disorders may fear criticism or prejudice when pursuing treatment.

Nurses, as primary healthcare practitioners, are crucial in addressing the stigma associated with addiction. By cultivating a caring, non-judgmental atmosphere and providing evidence-based information, nurses can confront myths and establish a supportive setting for patients to candidly address their challenges with substance use [32]. Nurses can fight for policy reforms inside healthcare facilities to ensure addiction is recognized as a medical disease rather than a moral or behavioral issue, in addition to delivering direct care. Informing both the public and healthcare practitioners about the neurobiological dimensions of addiction might mitigate stigma and enhance treatment efficacy. Nurses should exemplify sympathetic conduct, assuring patients that addiction is manageable and recovery attainable with appropriate care and support [33].

Lack of Education and Training

A significant obstacle to effectively tackling substance abuse in healthcare environments is the insufficient education and training for nurses on addiction-related matters. Studies indicate that addiction education in nursing programs is frequently inadequate or inconsistent, resulting in healthcare providers being ill-equipped to identify, evaluate, and manage substance use problems effectively [34]. Williams et al. (2021) discovered that hardly 50% of nursing programs incorporate addiction education as an essential element of their curricula, leading to a considerable knowledge deficit among prospective nurses concerning evidence-based practices in addiction care [35]. Consequently, numerous nurses may be deficient in the requisite skills to recognize indicators of substance use problems or to properly manage withdrawal symptoms, thereby hindering prompt intervention and suitable care.

To rectify this deficiency, it is imperative that nursing schools integrate extensive addiction training into their curricula. This may encompass both theoretical understanding of the physiological and psychological dimensions of addiction and practical competencies in screening, assessment, and treatment methods. Nurses may also gain from ongoing education and specific certifications in addiction care to augment their knowledge [36]. Enhancing addiction education and training will enable nurses to more effectively treat patients with substance use disorders, hence improving care quality and contributing to superior patient outcomes. Moreover, promoting interprofessional collaboration via education can improve nurses' capacity to collaborate successfully with addiction experts, psychologists, and counselors in delivering comprehensive care [37].

Workforce Shortages and Resource Limitations

A notable problem in combating substance misuse is the scarcity of addiction specialists, including counselors and psychiatrists, alongside insufficient healthcare resources allocated for addiction treatment. The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) reports a significant deficit of educated addiction specialists in the United States, resulting in fewer than 15% of individuals with substance use problems obtaining the necessary specialized care [38]. This deficit exerts further strain on nurses, who may be required to undertake responsibilities typically assigned to addiction specialists, such as assessment, withdrawal symptom treatment, and medication administration.

Numerous healthcare environments, particularly in poor and rural regions, face substantial resource constraints that hinder the delivery of sufficient addiction treatment. The restrictions encompass inadequate funding for addiction treatment programs, a deficiency of specialist detoxification centers, and a scarcity of inpatient beds for persons necessitating intensive care [39]. Nurses can bridge the gap by assuming a more proactive role in addiction treatment, which encompasses conducting screenings, delivering education, and coordinating care across diverse healthcare systems. By assuming increased responsibilities and collaborating within interdisciplinary teams, nurses can guarantee that persons with substance use disorders have the comprehensive care they necessitate, notwithstanding workforce shortages and resource limitations.

The strain on nurses underscores the necessity of resolving the systemic flaws inside the healthcare system that lead to these shortages and constraints. Promoting enhanced funding for addiction treatment programs and augmenting support for the education and training of addiction specialists is essential for tackling these issues. Nurses can serve as influential champions for these modifications, striving to guarantee that addiction treatment is prioritized in healthcare policy and practice [40].

Support and Recovery in Addiction

Long-Term Support for Addicts

The rehabilitation process for individuals with substance use disorders (SUDs) is typically prolonged, necessitating ongoing support and involvement even post formal treatment completion. Prolonged assistance for addicts encompasses rehabilitation, aftercare, and follow-up treatment, all of which are essential for sustaining sobriety and averting relapse. Nurses, due to their distinctive role within healthcare teams, are essential for the efficacy of post-treatment care for patients recovering from addiction. Their responsibilities encompass delivering emotional support, educating on coping strategies, aiding in the management of persistent medical or mental disorders, and assuring patient compliance with recommended aftercare plans [41].

Nurses assist clients in reintegrating into their communities and daily lives by providing access to resources, including outpatient therapy, social services, and support groups. Post-discharge follow-up is essential, as patients may encounter obstacles like as stigma, social isolation, and concurrent mental health disorders that could hinder their rehabilitation. Nurses can oversee patients during follow-up appointments, detect early indications of relapse, and offer direction and support to manage the intricacies of post-addiction life [42]. Nurses' participation in interdisciplinary care teams is crucial for developing personalized recovery programs, which may encompass counseling, medication management, and continuous health monitoring to guarantee enduring recovery and well-being.

Family and Peer Support

Familial and peer support are essential elements of addiction rehabilitation, profoundly influencing the enduring efficacy of therapy. Family therapy has demonstrated efficacy in enhancing treatment outcomes by addressing familial factors that may contribute to addiction or impede recovery [43]. Nurses play a crucial role in promoting family engagement in treatment by informing family members about the characteristics of addiction, the difficulties of recovery, and methods for offering constructive support. Nurses can assist families in navigating the intricacies of maintaining relationships with a recovered individual, aiding them in comprehending addiction as a chronic, relapsing condition that necessitates continuous care and patience.

Alongside familial support, peer support is vital in recovery, since those with personal experience of addiction can provide understanding, encouragement, and pragmatic guidance. Nurses can promote peer support by linking patients to group therapy programs or peer support networks like Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) or Narcotics Anonymous (NA). These support groups offer a setting of collective comprehension and reciprocal motivation, which is essential in the post-treatment phase. Nurses can advocate for the incorporation of peer support systems in addiction recovery programs, acknowledging the

efficacy of peer-led initiatives in enhancing professional treatment and fostering a comprehensive recovery strategy [44].

Relapse Prevention

Relapse is a prevalent obstacle in addiction recovery, and nurses are crucial in assisting patients in employing techniques to prevent relapse following treatment completion. An essential element of relapse prevention is recognizing triggers—circumstances, individuals, or feelings that may incite a return to substance use. Nurses can aid patients in formulating individualized relapse prevention strategies by instructing them in the identification and management of triggers. Nurses may provide cognitive-behavioral methods to assist patients in altering maladaptive thought patterns and behaviors that may result in relapse [45].

Nurses play a crucial role in monitoring patients' mental health and offering counseling for stress management, anxiety, depression, and other concurrent illnesses that frequently lead to relapse. They can aid patients in recognizing and confronting nascent psychological or emotional disorders promptly, which is vital for sustaining sobriety. Moreover, consistent follow-ups and continuous evaluations enable nurses to monitor the patient's development and detect potential concerns before they develop into more severe complications that could threaten recovery [46]. Nurses utilize a blend of personalized strategies, ongoing assessment, and emotional assistance to diminish the probability of relapse and facilitate the individual's sustained recovery.

Conclusion

Nurses play a varied and essential role in combating substance abuse and addiction, significantly contributing to both preventive and treatment initiatives. Nurses play a vital role in the early detection and assessment of persons predisposed to substance use disorders, employing instruments like the AUDIT and DAST to enable prompt interventions. Their participation in patient education, community outreach, and collaboration with interdisciplinary teams improves the efficacy of addiction prevention strategies. Nurses are crucial in overseeing detoxification, delivering psychosocial treatments, and administering medication-assisted treatment (MAT) to facilitate safe and effective recovery.

Notwithstanding the significance of their achievements, other problems persist in the industry, including stigma, insufficient specialized training, and staffing shortages. Nurses must possess sufficient education and resources to address these obstacles and enhance patient outcomes. Enhancing training in addiction treatment and expanding workforce capacity are critical to address the increasing demand for addiction services.

Long-term support and relapse prevention are essential elements of addiction therapy, with nurses playing a crucial role in aftercare, promoting family and peer support, and providing techniques to avert relapse. Their capacity to amalgamate medical, psychosocial, and emotional assistance during the recovery process renders them essential participants in the addiction care continuum.

Nursing interventions are essential for both the acute management of addiction and the prolonged recovery process. Additional research and improved education are essential to augment nurses' competencies and assure their preparedness to address the changing requirements of persons facing substance abuse challenges.

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ملخص

الخلفية: يشكل الإدمان على المواد المخدرة من التحديات الكبرى التي تواجه الأنظمة الصحية حول العالم، مما يؤدي إلى تأثيرات خطيرة على الأفراد والمجتمعات. تلعب الممرضات دورًا حيويًا في الكشف المبكر، العلاج، والوقاية من الإدمان، حيث تتطلب هذه العملية فهماً شاملاً للآليات النفسية والبيولوجية للإدمان بالإضافة إلى القدرة على تقديم الدعم الشامل للمرضى وعائلاتهم.

الهدف: يهدف هذا البحث إلى استكشاف دور الممرضين في معالجة إساءة استخدام المواد والإدمان، مع التركيز على الطرق المختلفة التي يمكن للممرضين من خلالها المساهمة في الوقاية والعلاج من الإدمان. يتناول البحث أيضًا التدخلات الطبية والنفسية التي يمكن أن يقوم بها الممرضون لتحسين نتائج العلاج وتوفير الدعم المستدام للمرضى.

الطرق: تمت مراجعة الأدبيات الحالية المتعلقة بدور الممرضين في الوقاية والعلاج من الإدمان، بما في ذلك أدوات التقييم المبكر مثل "AUDIT" و"DAST"، إلى جانب استعراض التدخلات النفسية والطبية التي يديرها الممرضون، مثل الرعاية التلطيفية والعلاج الدوائي المدعوم.

النتائج: يُظهر البحث أن الممرضين يلعبون دورًا محوريًا في الوقاية من الإدمان من خلال الكشف المبكر، وتوفير العلاج النفسي والطبي، بالإضافة إلى دعم المرضى بعد العلاج. كما يظهر أن التدريب المتخصص للممرضين يمكن أن يسهم بشكل كبير في تحسين النتائج السريرية للمرضى الذين يعانون من الإدمان.

الخلاصة: إن دور الممرضين في معالجة الإدمان يشمل الوقاية والعلاج والدعم المستدام للمرضى، ويتطلب ذلك تدريبًا مستمرًا لضمان تقديم أفضل الرعاية الممكنة. من الضروري تكثيف البحث والتدريب في هذا المجال لتحسين فعالية التدخلات التمرضية وتوسيع نطاق تأثيرها في مكافحة الإدمان.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإدمان، إساءة استخدام المواد، التدخلات التمرضية، العلاج الدوائي المدعوم، الدعم النفسي.