

substance use

Community management of opioid overdose

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN THESE GUIDELINES

abstinence

Refraining from alcohol or drug use. The term “abstinence” should not be confused with the term “abstinence syndrome”, which refers to a withdrawal syndrome.

agonist

A substance that acts at a neuronal receptor to produce effects similar to those of a reference drug; for example, heroin is a morphine-like agonist at opioid receptors.

antagonist

A substance that counteracts the effects of another agent. Pharmacologically, an antagonist interacts with a receptor to inhibit the action of agents (agonists) that produce specific physiological or behavioural effects mediated by that receptor.

delirium

An acute organic cerebral syndrome characterized by concurrent disturbances of consciousness, attention, perception, orientation, thinking, memory, psychomotor behaviour, emotion, and the sleep-wake cycle. Duration is variable from a few hours to a few weeks and the degree of severity ranges from mild to very severe. An alcohol-induced withdrawal syndrome with delirium is known as delirium tremens.

dependence

A cluster of physiological, behavioural and cognitive phenomena in which the use of a substance or a class of substances takes on a much higher priority for a given individual than other behaviours that once had greater value. A central descriptive characteristic of the dependence syndrome is the desire (often strong, sometimes overpowering) to take psychoactive drugs (which may or may not have been medically prescribed), alcohol or tobacco.

depressant

Any agent that suppresses, inhibits, or decreases some aspects of central nervous system (CNS) activity. The main classes of CNS depressants are the sedatives/hypnotics (alcohol, barbiturates, benzodiazepines), opioids, and neuroleptics. Anticonvulsants are sometimes included in the depressant group because of their inhibitory action on abnormal neural activity. Disorders related to depressant use are classified as psychoactive-substance use disorders in ICD-10 in categories F10 (for alcohol), F11 (for opioids), and F13 (for sedatives or hypnotics). *See also:* opioid; sedative/hypnotic.

detoxification

Also referred to as managed withdrawal or supported withdrawal, detoxification describes supported cessation of a psychoactive substance.

illicit drug

A psychoactive substance, the production, sale, or use of which is prohibited. Strictly speaking, it is not the drug that is illicit, but its production, sale, or use in particular circumstances in a given jurisdiction. “Illicit drug market”, a more exact term, refers to the production, distribution and sale of any drug outside legally-sanctioned channels.

intoxication

A condition that follows the administration or consumption of a psychoactive substance causing disturbances in the level of consciousness, cognition, perception, judgement, affect or behaviour, or other psychophysiological functions and responses.

multiple drug use

The use of more than one drug or type of drug by an individual, at the same time or sequentially, usually with the intention of enhancing, potentiating or counteracting the effects of another drug. The term is also used more loosely to include the unconnected use of two or more drugs by the same person.

naloxone

An opioid-receptor blocker that antagonizes the actions of opioid drugs. It reverses the features of opiate intoxication and is prescribed for the treatment of overdose with this group of drugs. *See also:* antagonist.

opiate

One of a group of alkaloids derived from the opium poppy (*Papaver somniferum*) with the ability to induce analgesia, euphoria and, in higher doses, stupor, coma and respiratory depression. The term opiate excludes synthetic opioids. *See also:* opioid.

opioid

A generic term applied to alkaloids from the opium poppy (*Papaver somniferum*), their synthetic analogues and compounds synthesized in the body, which interact with the same specific receptors in the brain, have the capacity to relieve pain and produce a sense of well-being (euphoria). The opium alkaloids and their synthetic analogues also cause stupor, coma and respiratory depression in high doses.

opioid maintenance treatment

Also referred to as opioid agonist maintenance treatment or opioid substitution treatment. Examples of opioid maintenance therapies are methadone and buprenorphine maintenance treatment. Maintenance treatment can last from several months to more than 20 years, and is often accompanied by other treatment (such as psychosocial treatment).

overdose

The use of any drug in such an amount that acute adverse physical or mental effects are produced. Deliberate overdose is a common means of suicide and attempted suicide. In absolute numbers, overdoses of licit drugs are usually more common than those of illicit drugs. Overdose may produce transient or lasting effects, or death. The lethal dose of a particular drug varies with the individual and with circumstances. *See also:* intoxication; poisoning.

poisoning, alcohol or drug

A state of major disturbance of consciousness level, vital functions and behaviour following the administration in excessive dosage (deliberately or accidentally) of a psychoactive substance. In the field of toxicology, the term poisoning is used more broadly to denote a state resulting from the administration of excessive amounts of any pharmacological agent, psychoactive or not. *See also:* overdose; intoxication.

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