

The Genesis Therapy Center

SUMMER 2017

The Opioid Epidemic

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We have all been hearing about the growing devastation of opioid abuse in the United States, especially for older men and women. In 2015, 2.7 million Americans over the age of 50 abused painkillers, meaning they took them for reasons or in amounts beyond what the doctor prescribed.

Nearly 14,000 people over 45 died from an opioid overdose in 2015. The hospitalization rate due to opioid abuse has increased 4x for those 65 and older in the past two decades. The chief culprits are opiate-based pain relievers such as Vicodin (hydrocodone), OxyContin, Percocet (oxycodone), codeine, morphine, and Actiq (fentanyl), the flavored lollipop that is 100 times stronger than morphine and very overprescribed, with only 10% of its sales for its original indication to treat cancer pain.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/12/22/americas-deadliest-pills_n_1166033.html

Physical dependency can occur within one week, meaning there would be some discomfort or side effects when use is stopped, says Andrew Kolodny, Executive Director of Physicians for Responsible Opioid Prescribing.

Experts believe this epidemic has blown up because pharmaceutical companies have marketed opioids aggressively to physicians, especially after the Federal Drug Administration approved OxyContin in 1995. Prior to this, painkillers were primarily used for short term pain relief. After this, opioid prescriptions by doctors increased dramatically, including for longer term pain relief. There was a grave miscalculation overestimating the benefits of opioids for pain management and underestimating the risks for longer term pain management. Medical schools taught that opioid medication was not addictive as long as it was given to someone in legitimate pain, something we now know is not true. There was also a misconception that older people would not become addicted to these medications.

AARP BULLETIN/RealPossibilities June 2017 John Rosengren

What To Do

We need to have many more treatment centers for treatment of opioid addiction, especially oriented toward treatment for older patients. There are medications that can help as well and doctors need to be educated about these medications. We also need to have a major change in attitudes about opioid addiction. There is a widespread mistaken belief that it is a moral failing instead of a chronic medical condition that requires treatment.

On a personal level, be very careful when getting prescriptions for pain. They are very effective for very short-term pain relief, three days worth is typically sufficient. But for chronic pain relief, be sure to talk to your doctor about addiction potential. Look for non-addictive and non-drug pain management solutions. If you wind up taking an opioid for chronic pain, the CDC advises starting at the lowest effective dose and checking in with your doctor regularly to make sure that the drug is helping and that you are able to take it safely.

If you are concerned that you have become addicted to a prescription medication, talk to a therapist or find a treatment program. Get professional help- it is dangerous to manage on your own.

<http://www.consumerreports.org/pain-relief/addictive-pain-medication-how-protect-yourself/>

The Genesis Therapy
Center's
14th Annual
KidPower
Benefit

Sunday, Oct. 29, 2017

Gambling Addiction

Joleen Hartland MS, LCPC

Gambling has become a very common past time, expanding across the country over the past couple of decades. Casino gambling was illegal everywhere in the United States outside of Nevada and Atlantic City, New Jersey, only 40 years ago. Now, some 1,000 casinos are operating in 40 states. Casino patrons bet more than \$37 billion annually—more than Americans spend to attend sporting events (\$17.8 billion), go to the movies (\$10.7 billion), and buy music (\$6.8 billion) combined. Casinos are popping up everywhere. Lottery tickets are readily available everywhere. Online gambling has proliferated as well.

The preferred mode of gambling these days is electronic gaming machines, of which there are now almost 1 million nationwide, offering variations on slots and video poker. Their prevalence has accelerated addiction and reaped huge profits for casino operators. A significant portion of casino revenue now comes from a small percentage of customers, most of them likely addicts, playing machines that are designed explicitly to lull them into a trancelike state that the industry refers to as “continuous gaming productivity.” The casinos offer free liquor and other incentives to keep the gambler gambling.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/12/losing-it-all/505814/>

The signs of a gambling problem are often the same as the signs of other addictions and include:

***Feeling the need to be secretive about gambling;
Having trouble controlling gambling habits;
Gambling when you cannot afford to;
Your friends and family express concern about your gambling.***

Of course, as with any other addiction, the hallmark sign of a gambling problem is that you feel you cannot stop. If you feel like you or a loved one needs to keep gambling even after severe consequences, or if you or a loved one feels anxious when you think about quitting, it is highly likely you or a loved one are suffering from a gambling addiction.

<http://www.psychguides.com/guides/compulsive-gambling>

If you have a gambling problem:

- Join a support group such as gamblers anonymous. <http://www.gamblersanonymous.org>
- If you are having a difficult time with someone you love’s gambling problem, there is a support group- gam-anon.org
- Talk to a counselor.
- Medication can be helpful for many people. Talk with your doctor.
- You can request that casinos put you on their voluntary self-exclusion list which bars you from the casinos.

Like any addiction, compulsive gambling can be difficult to overcome. You may find it difficult to admit that you have a problem. Healing the shame or guilt that you feel will be a big step on the road to recovery. If you don’t treat your gambling problem, it can lead to serious financial issues. It can also negatively affect your relationships with family members, friends, and others. Effective treatment can help you avoid these consequences and repair damage to your relationships.

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