


**SUBSTANCE USE AND MENTAL ILL-
HEALTH IN YOUNG PEOPLE**
ACECHO 2024

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**WHAT CAN THE AOD CLINICIAN DO FOR
THE YOUNG PERSON WITH AOD
ISSUES?**

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IDENTIFY, INTERVENE & ADVISE


- Early identification
- Risk factors
- Emotional dysregulation → Prevention
- Early intervention
- Screening & assessment procedures
- Management knowledge & skills
- Inform drug policy
- Evidence-informed advocacy re young people, AOD use & potential long-term mental health effects



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**AOD USE IN YOUNG PEOPLE CAN BE THE NORM –
A DEVELOPMENTAL SPECTRUM**

- Experimental
- Social
- Instrumental
- Habitual
- Compulsive



Curiosity, novelty-seeking, risk-taking
Peer-influenced, "Gateway"
Manipulate affect, behaviour, pleasure
Reliance for coping and recreation
Salience, loss of function

↑ age
↑ substance use
↑ risk/severity of SUD

From Nowinski (1990)

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OVERVIEW



- EPIDEMIOLOGY
- PATHWAYS TO CO-OCCURRING DISORDERS
- ASSESSMENT & DIAGNOSTIC ISSUES
- INTERVENTIONS
- MODELS OF CARE
- RESOURCES

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**LONG-TERM ASSOCIATION OF SUD SYMPTOMS IN
ADOLESCENCE WITH PRESCRIPTION DRUG USE,
PDM, AND SUD SYMPTOMS IN ADULTHOOD**

11 cohorts of high school seniors surveyed in annual nationwide National Institute on Drug Abuse – funded **Monitoring the Future study**: age 18 years (study years 1976-1986) to 50 years

Severe substance use disorder (SUD) in high school → still 2 or more SUD symptoms in midlife

"Teens with SUDs cannot necessarily be expected to age out of their disorders"

McCabe SE, Schulenberg JE, Schepis TS, et al (2022)
Volkow ND, Wargo EM (2022)

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EPIDEMIOLOGY ISSUES



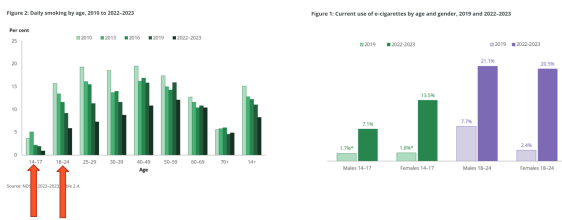
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AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL DRUG STRATEGY HOUSEHOLD SURVEY 2022-23

Every 3 years since 1985
 21,663 Australians aged 14 years and over
Self-completion, drop-and-collect questionnaire (72%)
Online (28%)
Telephone interview (0.1%)
 43.9% response rate
 Excluded:
Non-private dwellings, institutional settings (AOD rehab, military, prison), homeless
Australian Institute of Health & Welfare (2024)

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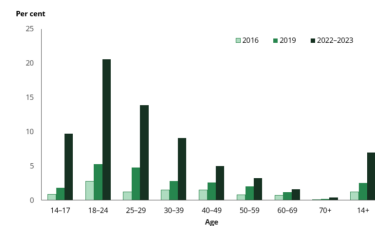
YOUTH SMOKING V VAPING



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VAPING MOST COMMON IN 18-24 YEAR OLDS

Figure 4: Current^(a) use of e-cigarettes by age, 2016 to 2022-2023



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"STRONG EVIDENCE THAT E-CIGARETTES INCREASE COMBUSTIBLE SMOKING UPTAKE IN NON-SMOKERS, PARTICULARLY YOUTH" 2022

"and limited evidence that in the clinical setting, freebase nicotine e-cigarettes are efficacious as an aid to smoking cessation"

"cause poisoning, injuries and burns and immediate toxicity through inhalation, including seizures, and that their use leads to addiction and that they cause less serious adverse events, such as throat irritation and nausea"

"A central finding of this systematic review is the paucity of evidence regarding e-cigarettes and clinical health outcomes"

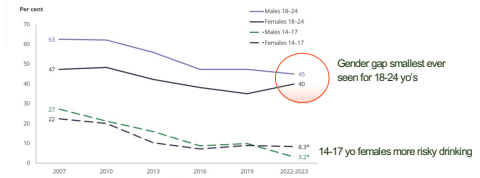
"Dual" e-cigarette & tobacco use most common



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YOUNG MALES NOW LESS LIKELY THAN FEMALES TO DRINK ALCOHOL AT RISKY LEVELS

Figure 2: Risky alcohol consumption by age and gender, 2007 to 2022-2023



^(a) Estimates have a relative standard error between 25% and 50% and should be interpreted with caution.
 Source: NDHS 2007-2022-2023, Table 4.26.

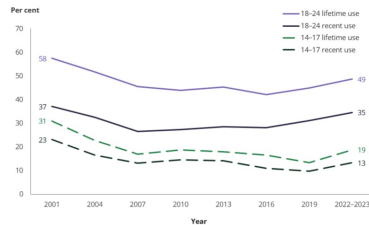
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USE OF ILLICIT DRUGS REMAINS HIGHEST AMONGST YOUNG PEOPLE

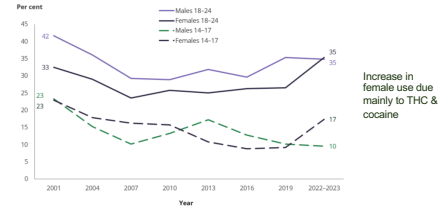
Figure 3: Use of any illicit drug in Australia by age, 2001 to 2022-2023



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ILLICIT USE OF DRUGS HIGHER AMONG YOUNG FEMALES THAN YOUNG MALES FOR THE FIRST TIME

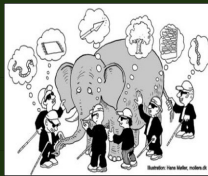
Figure 4: Recent^(a) use of any illicit drug, young people aged 14-24, by gender, 2001 to 2022-2023



(a) Used at least 1 of 17 classes of illicit drugs in the previous 12 months in 2022-2023. The number and type of illicit drugs varied over time.

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EPIDEMIOLOGY OF YOUTH DUAL DIAGNOSIS



DEPENDS ON YOUR VANTAGE POINT

Are you working in an AOD or a MH service?

IMPLICATIONS OF COMORBIDITY

Poorer prognosis
Poor Rx compliance
Repeated hospitalisation
Problems with rehabilitation
Suicide

Homelessness
Violence
Imprisonment
Early mortality
Medical problems

Dixon L (1999)

12 MONTH MENTAL DISORDERS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE 16 – 24 YEARS (%) IN GENERAL POPULATION

	Anxiety	Affective	Substance Use	Any
Males	9.3	4.3	15.5	22.8
Females	21.7	8.4	9.8	30.1
All young persons	15.4	6.3	12.7	26.4
All ages (16 – 85 years)	14.4	6.2	5.1	20.0

AOD disorders almost as prevalent as anxiety disorder

National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing 2007

- < 1 in 4 16 – 24 year olds accessed health services c.f. > 1 in 3 16 – 85 year olds
- Gap in help-seeking mainly due to substance use disorders, especially young males

Reavley NJ, Cvetkovski S, Jorm A & Lubman DL 2010

ALSO IN THE USA: LOW TREATMENT RATES FOR YOUTH WITH MDD & SUD

JAMA Network Open

Original Investigation | Psychiatry
Trends and Disparities in Treatment for Co-occurring Major Depression and Substance Use Disorders Among US Adolescents From 2011 to 2019

Methods | Results | Conclusions | Relevance | Funding | Acknowledgments | Disclosures | Supplemental Digital Content

RESULTS: In total, 18 362 adolescents participated in the 2011 to 2019 survey, among whom 63 584 (51%) were boys and 66 478 (50%) were girls. 45 548 (24%) were aged 16 to 17 years, and 18 172 (10%) were Black, 28 687 (15%) were Hispanic, and 14 121 (8%) were White. From 2011 to 2019, the annual prevalence of co-occurring MDD and SUD decreased from 4.4% to 1.7%. Among adolescents with co-occurring MDD and SUD, the prevalence of treatment use for MDD only increased significantly from 38.9% to 42.3% in 2019 (odds ratio [OR], 1.07; 95% CI, 1.03 to 1.11; $P = .005$), whereas the prevalence of treatment use for SUD only decreased from 4.8% to 1.5% (OR, 0.32; 95% CI, 0.28 to 0.36; $P = .001$). Overall, the prevalence of treatment use for both conditions fluctuated between 4.2% and 10.5%, without a significant trend over time (OR, 0.95; 95% CI, 0.87 to 1.03; $P = .24$). Extensive disparities in treatment use were found among boys for SUD and both conditions, older adolescents for MDD, Hispanic adolescents for co-occurring conditions (adjusted OR, 0.53; 95% CI, 0.37 to 0.76; $P = .001$), and Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander adolescents for MDD (adjusted OR, 0.24; 95% CI, 0.10 to 0.58; $P = .002$) and co-occurring conditions (adjusted OR, 0.04; 95% CI, 0.01 to 0.33; $P = .003$). Moving households 3 or more times in the past 12 months was associated with higher odds that adolescents received treatment for both conditions (adjusted OR, 2.12; 95% CI, 1.25 to 3.58; $P = .005$).

CONCLUSIONS AND RELEVANCE: This survey study found that from 2011 to 2019, less than 12% of adolescents with major depression and SUD received treatment for both conditions from 2011 to 2019. Findings from this study call for expanded service provision for adolescents with co-occurring conditions, improved coordination between service delivery systems, and enhanced policy and funding support for adolescents with unmet treatment needs.

JAMA Network Open. 2021;4(10):e2130280. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2021.30280

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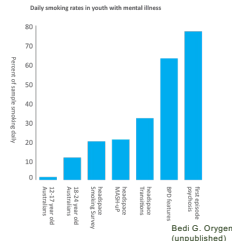
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SUBSTANCE USE IN YOUTH MH POPULATIONS

First Episode Psychosis
30% used methamphetamine in last 12 months
33% clinically significant cannabis use
6 years prior to FEP

BPD
5x severe alcohol use disorder
4-9x more likely to use other drugs

MDD
46.7% cannabis and 31% alcohol use disorder



Bedi G. Orygen (unpublished)

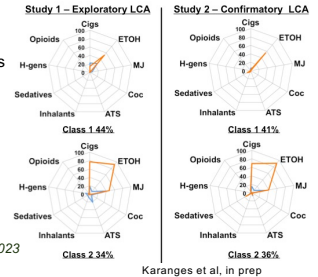
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WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY

- 300 YP from waiting rooms
- Latent Cluster Analysis – subgroups based on drug use
- 4 groups:
 - 1. Only alcohol (41%) – youngest
 - 2. Alcohol, cigs, cannabis (36%)



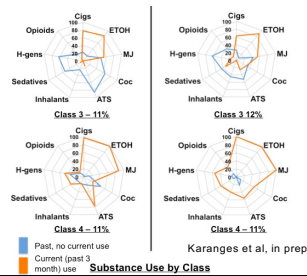
From A/Prof G Bedi 2023



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WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY

- 3. Past polydrug, current alcohol, cigs, cannabis (12%)
- 4. Current polydrug (11%) – highest distress
- Replicated in second sample collected earlier
- Clinically meaningful substance use – despite ↓ demand for specific treatment



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IMPACT OF SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER IN FIRST-EPISODE PSYCHOSIS

62% with SUD at start of 18 months treatment → 36% at completion

Reduced or cessation of use → better outcomes

Persistent use → non-compliance, treatment drop-out & poor remission

Possible relationships between substance use and outcomes

Persistent SUD → biological, psychological changes preventing FEP remission

Improvement in FEP symptoms → reduce or stop substance use

Common neurobiological factors underlying both SUD & FEP

Lambert M, Conus P, Lubman DL et al (2005)

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ANXIETY AND MOOD DISORDER IN YOUNG PEOPLE IN AOD TREATMENT

N = 100

49% concurrent anxiety or mood disorder, particularly females

Major depression 27%

PTSD 26%

Greater psychopathology, psychological drug dependence & risky behaviours

Poorer quality of life

Lubman DL, Allen N, Rogers N, Cementon E & Bonomo Y (2007)

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AETIOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

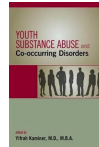
Know the risk factors – they are common to all substance use and other mental health problems

Know the risk factors – there are points of early intervention

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KNOWING THE RISK FACTORS FOR SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER: GENETIC TO SOCIOCULTURAL

1. Genetic
2. Early brain development
3. Environmental



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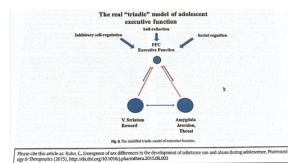
KNOWING THE RISK FACTORS: 1. GENETIC

40 – 60 % of vulnerability
 Early twin & adoption studies
 400 of 250,000 genes identified
 Epigenetic and gene expression processes remain unclear
 Frontal cortical grey matter organisation
 → **Executive cognitive capacities, externalising behaviours, internalising disturbances**
 → **"Neurobehavioural disinhibition" trait correlates with SUD from childhood to adulthood** *Tarter & Horner (in Kaminer ed 2016)*
 Physical & sexual maturation rates important

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KNOWING THE RISK FACTORS: 2. EARLY BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

"Brain plasticity" – adolescent remodelling, pruning, neuromaturation
 Prefrontal cortex
 Fear processing
 Reward cue processing
 → amplified motivation for reward & sensation-seeking
 → deficient control/inhibitory system
 → exposure to AOD in social contexts



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AGE ON INITIATION OF DRUG USE < 15 YEARS

Alcohol as an example:

In heavy drinking adolescents over 3.5 yrs:
 ↓ typical cortical volume decline
 ↓ white matter structure growth

Bourque J, Baker TE, Dagher A, et al 2016

Alcohol as "gateway" drug

↑ later adolescent alcohol & other drug misuse
 ↑ later drink driving & accidents
 ↑ risky sexual behaviours

Does delaying onset of drinking prevent later AOD disorder or protect neurodevelopment?

Kreitzberg & Pasch 2016

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KNOWING THE RISK FACTORS: 3. ENVIRONMENTAL RISK FACTORS

Maltreatment & early stress
 Emotional, physical & sexual abuse
 Parenting
 Prenatal exposure to ATOD
 Parental ATOD use & antisocial behaviour
 Insecure attachments
 Witnessing violence or abuse

Peer relationships
 Adoption of adult behaviours
 Popular belief re anxiolytic properties of AOD
 Friendships with similarly dysregulated youths
 Use of caffeinated drinks
 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background

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BOTH INTERNALISING AND EXTERNALISING PROBLEMS → AOD USE

INTERNALISING

•Poor emotion modulation
 •Anxiety/depression prior to AOD use
 •Self-medication coping style
 •? Legal drugs
 → cycle of AOD use & anxiety/depression in long-term

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BOTH INTERNALISING AND EXTERNALISING PROBLEMS → AOD USE

EXTERNALISING

Behavioural undercontrol

- High risk-taking
- High sociability
- Oppositionality

? Illegal drugs preference

Persistent CD/antisocial behaviour rather than AOD use → later depression

ADHD → tobacco, alcohol & THC use – CD as mediator

Choi, Worley, Trim et al 2016

GABA receptor function implicated

Sibley, Peilham, Molina et al 2015

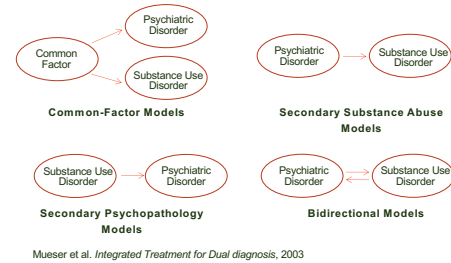
Use of prescribed medications e.g. stimulant Rx for ADHD:

- ? protective against SUD in children, risk factor for SUD in adolescence

Kaminer Y et al 2016

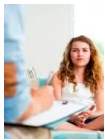
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DUAL DIAGNOSIS MODELS



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ASSESSMENT ISSUES IN YOUTH WITH CO-OCCURRING DISORDERS



Adopt a welcoming, non-judgmental, hopeful & empathic approach

Reasons for substance use

"not here to judge"

Explore harms occurring – connect with AOD use



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WHY DO PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS USE DRUGS?

To feel good

To cope

Social & peer interactions & acceptance

Denial of mental illness & its stigma

Leisure time, boredom

Self-medication

Self-harm



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HOWEVER YOUNG PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS MAY USE DRUGS FOR SPECIFIC REASONS

- Expectation of positive & drug effects

Habit, help sleep, think clearly

- Socialise

Enjoy parties, more fun, fit in, not to conform

- Coping with negative affect

Forget worries & problems, cheer up

Predictive of substance use disorder

Hides I, Lubman DL, Cosgrave EM et al (2008)

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ASSESSMENT & DIAGNOSIS

Is the psychiatric syndrome substance-induced or independent?

Chronological onset of symptoms in relation to substance use

Family history

Persistence of symptoms?

No substance use vs more/less substance use

Past response to Rx

SUD diagnosis in young people

DSM 5 elimination of Substance Abuse & Dependence

→ **Dimensional approach** – mild, moderate, severe SUD more applicable to YP

Addition of behavioural addictive disorders, including internet gaming

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THE FAMILY AND THE YOUNG PERSON: REDUCE THE RISK FACTORS, STRENGTHEN THE PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Parenting style – care & control
Parental relationships
Parental psychopathology & substance use
Parental tolerance to risk-taking behaviours
Family interactions
Expressed emotion
Family breakdown
Socioeconomic status



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SCHOOL & PEER FACTORS

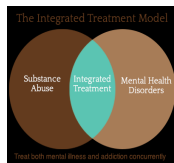
Quality of peer relationships
Social activities
Presence of AOD use
Bullying
Isolation at school
Engagement in school activities



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DUAL DIAGNOSIS TREATMENT ISSUES

Integration is the key



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3 PRINCIPLES OF CARE FOR CO-OCCURRING PSYCHIATRIC AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS

1. **Integrated** MH & addiction care across treatment settings
2. Responsive to needs of YP exposed to **trauma** & other adverse childhood experiences
3. **Regularly assess & respond** to evolving MH needs, motivations & goals of YP

"Principles of Care for Young Adults With Co-Occurring Psychiatric and Substance Use Disorders" Spencer, Valentine, Sikov et al 2021

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WHAT IS INTEGRATED MENTAL HEALTH & ADDICTION CARE?

Bring together responses to young person's mental health and AOD issues → integrated treatment plan

Joint planning with young person +/- family/carer/s

individualised

what does the young person want?

consider developmental issues

AOD harm reduction

trauma-informed

mutually agreed goals

monitor evolving MH needs, motivations & goals

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HOWEVER THERE ARE 2 SILOS IN AUSTRALIA



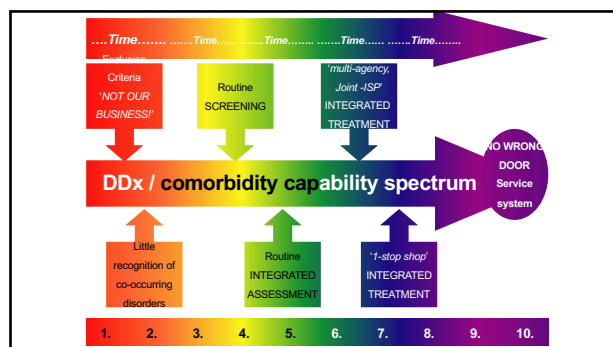
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MODELS OF COMORBIDITY TREATMENT

1. Integrated
2. Sequential
3. Parallel



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PARALLEL TREATMENT !



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WHERE IS DUAL DIAGNOSIS IN AUSTRALIA NOW?

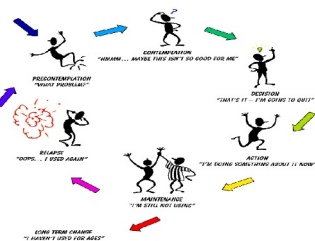
- High profile
 - High prevalence, 'the expectation, rather than the exception'
- Widespread screening & assessment
- Low adoption of integrated treatment models
 - Psychiatrists' and other clinicians' attitudes
 - Stigma of AOD misuse
 - Reluctance to adopt 'No Wrong Door' or DD as 'core business'
 - Interprofessional cultural conflicts
 - Few resources to support government policy

Roberts & Mayberry (2014)

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STAGES OF CHANGE

PROCHASKA & DICLEMENTE



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STAGES OF DUAL DIAGNOSIS TREATMENT

1. Engagement
 - Crucial
 - Often unrelated to clinical issues
 - Harm reduction
2. Persuasion
 - Consider brief interventions, motivational interviewing
3. Active treatment
 - Provide options
4. Relapse prevention

From Osher & Kofed (1989)

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YOUTH-SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS PRINCIPLES

Early recognition → early intervention & prevention
 Reduce risk factors & strengthen protective factors
 Challenge of developing a social network without drug use
 Outreach & opportunistic health care

Developmental focus

- Identity formation
- Separation – individuation from family
- Vocational, educational

Ethical considerations

- Confidentiality, autonomy



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TRY PSYCHOSOCIAL BEFORE PHARMACOLOGICAL INTERVENTIONS

Some exceptions – psychosis, severe mood disorder, severe substance use disorder
 Brief interventions – early, less severe SUD

e.g. FRAMES

Feedback
 Responsibility
 Advice
 Menu
 Empathy
 Self-efficacy

Most therapies adaptable e.g. CBT, ACT, CAT, IPT, MI, trauma-focused therapy
 Joint work with other agencies e.g. YSAS, ACP
 Residential programmes e.g. MHCS
 Mutual-help groups

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FAMILY INTERVENTIONS

Psychoeducation for all co-occurring problems

Caring & supportive relationships

Problem-solving

EE reduction

Formal therapies e.g.

- Strengthening Families Program (US)
- Community Reinforcement and Family Training (CRAFT)
- Parenting Adolescents a Creative Experience Program (Aus)
- Multi-dimensional Family Therapy

Management of parental problems:

- psychopathology, anxiety, depression & substance misuse
- Anger, denial, collusion with young person
- Referral to drug-specific mutual-help groups e.g. Family Drug Help



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THE CHALLENGES OF PROVIDING PSYCHOSOCIAL INTERVENTIONS

Dearth of evidence in youth – go for it!

Engagement

- Required before other stages of treatment e.g. persuasion, active treatment
- Flexibility, outreach, match to stage of change
- Attend to young person's social needs e.g. accommodation, financial

Rx adherence

- CBT homework demands, try non-written
- ? E-resources, apps

Therapy while intoxicated

- Non-judgmental, understanding, but also challenge

Working with the family, especially if AOD or other MH problems

Carroll, Hides, Catania, Mathias,
 Greenwood-Smith, Lubman 2009

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ADVICE FOR PARENTS

Parental modelling

Limiting access to AOD

Parental monitoring

Quality parent-child relationship & communication: care vs control

Less permissive parenting style

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PHARMACOLOGICAL TREATMENTS

Many psychotropic drugs not evaluated in children

Principle of *start low, go slow*

Integration of medications from both mental health & substance use fields

Alcohol dependence agents

Opioid replacement therapies

Take-home naloxone

Smoking cessation therapies

Monitor for iatrogenic drug misuse



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