



Connect • Advocate • Educate • Treat

Addiction is a chronic brain disease and there are treatments available to help patients.

Organization Background

The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM), founded in 1954, is a professional society representing over 3,600 physicians, clinicians and associated professionals in the field of addiction medicine. ASAM is dedicated to increasing access and improving the quality of addiction treatment, educating physicians and the public, supporting research and prevention, and promoting the appropriate role of physicians in the care of patients with addiction.

The Facts About Addiction

Addiction is a chronic brain disease. Forty million Americans ages 12 or older – or more than 1 in 7 people - have addiction involving nicotine, alcohol or other drugs. This is more than the number of Americans with heart conditions (27 million), diabetes (26 million) or cancer (19 million).¹ Addiction is costly to our Nation, exacting more than \$700 billion annually in costs related to crime, lost work productivity and health care.² Studies have documented the effectiveness of treatment with total savings related to health care, reduced drug-related crimes and criminal justice exceeding costs by a ratio of 12 to 1.³ Too often, however, addiction goes untreated, with estimates that only 10 percent of people who need treatment receive it.⁴

Connect - Engaging members and other partners

ASAM membership offers the opportunity to develop public policies, design continuing education programs, educate legislators, network with peers and attend world-renowned courses in the field of addiction medicine. ASAM has 39 state and regional chapters throughout the United States that involve members in local activities, education and state advocacy efforts.

Advocate - Furthering access to addiction care

ASAM regularly develops and releases policy statements on issues affecting addiction and treatment at the federal and state levels. Recent policies cover topics such as use of naloxone; measures to counteract prescription drug misuse and diversion; and access to medications to treat opioid addiction. ASAM regularly brings members to Washington, DC, to meet with legislators and policymakers to educate them about the issues important to ASAM members, and the patients and families they serve. ASAM has held a seat in the AMA House of Delegates since 1988 that provides the opportunity to address addiction-related policy issues across medicine.

Educate - Delivering the best continuing medical education in addiction medicine

ASAM has been an ACCME-accredited provider of continuing education since 1977, and is a recognized leader in the planning and presentation of educational events in the addiction field. ASAM's educational programs prepare physicians and clinicians to translate the power of science into high-quality services for patients, their families, and communities. Through its publications, journal, textbooks, and educational programs, ASAM addresses the most fundamental questions about addiction, ranging from helping physicians and clinicians understand how drugs act on the brain; fostering the dissemination and adoption of new treatment interventions; and responding to emerging problems such as the misuse of prescription drugs.

Treat - Setting standards and disseminating research

ASAM is the leader in setting standards and disseminating research for the addiction field. *The ASAM Criteria*, whose development started over 20 years ago, defines systematic rules to determine the level of care that is needed based upon a patient's current mental, emotional and social situation. After years of research validating their effectiveness, *The ASAM Criteria* are now widely recognized and are required in some form in 33 states. In addition to *The ASAM Criteria*, ASAM recently released guidelines on medications to treat addiction involving opioid use, practice standards for the addiction specialist physician, and associated performance measures.

ASAM's Definition of Addiction

Addiction is a primary, chronic disease of brain reward, motivation, memory and related circuitry. Dysfunction in these circuits leads to characteristic biological, psychological, social and spiritual manifestations. This is reflected in an individual pathologically pursuing reward and/or relief by substance use and other behaviors.

Addiction is characterized by inability to consistently abstain, impairment in behavioral control, craving, diminished recognition of significant problems with one's behaviors and interpersonal relationships, and a dysfunctional emotional response. Like other chronic diseases, addiction often involves cycles of relapse and remission. Without treatment or engagement in recovery activities, addiction is progressive and can result in disability or premature death.

References

¹ CASA Columbia at <http://www.casacolumbia.org/about>

² NIDA at <http://www.drugabuse.gov/related-topics/trends-statistics>

³ NIDA at <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/teaching-packets/understanding-drug-abuse-addiction/section-iv/6-cost-effectiveness-drug-treatment>

⁴ NIDA at <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/treatment-approaches-drug-addiction>



ASAM The Voice of Addiction Medicine
American Society of Addiction Medicine

4601 North Park Avenue, Upper Arcade, Suite #101,
Chevy Chase, MD 20915 | www.ASAM.org | (301) 656-3920

