



The Voice of Addiction Medicine

Organization Background

The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM), founded in 1954, is a professional society representing over 6,000 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.

VISION

A future when addiction prevention, treatment, remission and recovery are accessible to all, and profoundly improve the health of all people.

MISSION

To be the physician-led professional community for those who prevent, treat, and promote remission and recovery from the disease of addiction, and to provide resources for continuing innovation, advancement, and implementation of addiction science and care.

ASAM's Definition of Addiction

Addiction is a primary, chronic disease of brain reward, motivation, memory and related circuitry. 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.

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.¹ This is more than the number of Americans with heart conditions (27 million), diabetes (26 million) or cancer (19 million).² Addiction is costly to our Nation, exacting more than \$700 billion annually in costs related to crime, lost work productivity and health care.³ 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 1.⁴ Too often, however, addiction goes untreated, with estimates that only 10 percent of people who need treatment receive it.⁵

ASAM's Advocacy Principles

TEACH IT. • STANDARDIZE IT. • COVER IT.

TEACH IT.

ASAM advocates for public policies that work to educate the public, patients, clinicians and policymakers about addiction and ensure that individuals are able to access treatments that have been proven to be effective at reducing overdose deaths and supporting individuals in recovery. With the rise of the opioid overdose epidemic, ASAM is committed to advocating for policies to grow the addiction medicine workforce by integrating addiction medicine into medical school and residency curricula and incentivizing clinicians to work in programs and practices that specialize in the treatment of substance use disorder and addiction.

STANDARDIZE IT.

There are many misconceptions about the disease of addiction, and a culture change is needed in this country to drive patients to the treatment options that have been proven to be effective at reducing overdose deaths and supporting patients in remission and recovery. It is critical that our treatment infrastructure reflect this by facilitating the use of evidence-based, research-validated guidelines and standards for the treatment of addiction and employing competency-based addiction education for all healthcare providers.

COVER IT.

One of the greatest barriers to the successful treatment of individuals with addiction is the current healthcare financing system for outpatient treatment, which offers little support for the coordination of behavioral, social, and psychological services that patients often need in addition to medication. This segregation and lack of coordination has made it difficult for many individuals to receive comprehensive care and access the most effective and appropriate treatments. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, fewer than one in ten Americans with a substance use disorder received treatment. We must overhaul our addiction treatment infrastructure so that it facilitates the successful outpatient treatment of individuals with substance use disorder through coordinated, rather than siloed delivery of care.

References

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

² Ibid.

³ NIDA at <http://www.drugabuse.gov/related-topics/trends-statistics>

⁴ NIDA at <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/teaching-packets/understanding-drug-abuse-addiction/section-iv/6-cost-effectiveness-drug-treatment>

⁵ NIDA at <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/treatment-approaches-drug-addiction>



ASAM American Society of
Addiction Medicine

11400 Rockville Pike, Suite 200, Rockville, MD 20852
Phone: 301.656.3920 | Fax: 301.656.3815 | email@ASAM.org

