

PULSE

Mental health, substance abuse issues should be treated hand in hand

Every day of the week, the counselors and staff of the New Day Center, under the direction of Dr. Richard Ready, treat adults who suffer from substance abuse issues and mental health symptoms and the numbers are rising.

According to NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness), approximately one third of people experiencing mental illness and about half of all people living with severe mental illness also experience substance abuse. These statistics also mirror the substance abuse community, where approximately one-third of alcohol abusers and more than half of all drug abusers experience a mental illness.

The New Day Center, now part of Amita Health's Adventist Medical Center in Hinsdale, has treated members of the Hinsdale community and the community at large for more than 40 years.

At the New Day Center, it is typical for our patient population to abuse alcohol, prescription pills, opiates (including heroin) and marijuana. Most common mental health disorders include major depressive

disorder, bipolar disorder, generalized anxiety disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder. It is best practice, according to evidence-based models, that these issues should be treated simultaneously.

Often a patient who is treated for both a mental health disorder and a substance abuse issue is considered to have a dual-diagnosis or a co-occurring diagnosis. The treatment plan includes care from both an addictionologist and a psychiatric treatment provider working together as a team. The New Day Center treatment includes evidenced-based care that emphasizes a cognitive behavioral approach to treatment with relapse prevention as a significant component.

Historically, treatment has often been separate, but at the New Day Center, it is the priority of the treatment team that this care be integrated. By doing so, the probability of a positive outcome is increased and cost of care overall is decreased for



Emily Wagner

both the patient and the provider.

Another benefit includes the understanding of the individual patient, as often mental health symptoms mirror substance abuse withdrawal symptoms and at times substances are used to manage mental health symptoms.

Treatment at New Day includes daily group therapy, peer support, an emphasis on family education and support, understanding of the disease concept, skill building (including self-esteem, coping, stress management and many others), encouragement of sponsorship, 12-step meeting attendance and strict accountability, including daily Breathalyzer tests and random urine drug screens. NAMI is also involved in evening support groups.

It is the overall goal of this treatment to reduce substance use, improve psychiatric symptoms and functioning, decrease future hospitalizations, lessen the potential of recidivism in the legal system and improve

overall quality of life.

Once a patient has successfully completed treatment in one of our programs, he or she is welcome and encouraged to participate in a free aftercare program that helps keep the patient connected to a healthy community of sober peer support. The aftercare program can be as long as two years of support. According to research, the likelihood of remaining sober greatly increases for those who stay connected to a treatment center for a year after completing treatment.

Once in aftercare, sober fun is also encouraged, as the Discovery program coordinates a monthly sober activity such as camping, golfing, a movie night, coffee house and holiday events.

If you have any questions or are concerned about a loved one, please do not hesitate to reach out to the staff at the New Day Center. Assessments are free of charge and confidential and are completed during the work week.

— *Emily Wagner is an addiction services care manager at Amita Health's New Day Center.*