



Patient Interviewing Strategies to Destigmatize Substance Use Disorders

1

Zach Sneed, PhD, CRC, LCDC
Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center
Office of Interprofessional Education – Shatter the Stigma
Program Director, Addiction Counseling, Dept. of Clinical Counseling and Mental
Health, School of Health Professions
Clinical Assistant Professor, Dept. of Psychiatry, School of Medicine

Objectives

2

- Discuss communication methods that destigmatize substance use
- Explore screening and interview strategies that address substance use
- Discuss referral and treatment options

Effect of Language

3

- ▶ Healthcare provider language has a direct effect on the patient and interaction
- ▶ All substance use is stigmatized
 - ▶ Much of it heavily
- ▶ A common part of the substance use experience is the need to “protect” information
- ▶ Substance use is one of America’s top preventable health issues

Language Choice and Stigma

4

- Feeling stigmatized:
 - Causes people to hide their use
 - Reduce the willingness of people to seek help
 - Leaves many to “figure it out” on their own
- Stigmatizing views of substance use is common:
 - Can lead others to feel pity, fear, anger, frustration, and a desire for social distance or reasons for exclusion from services
- Stigmatizing language negatively influences health care provider perceptions of people with SUD
 - Which does impact the care they provide

Interviewing Steps

5

- ▶ Start with something like:
 - ▶ Would it be okay to ask you a few questions about substance use?
 - ▶ Can I ask you about alcohol and drug use?
- ▶ Then ask your questions – many providers shy away from this topic
 - ▶ Due to it being “personal” or “sensitive”
 - ▶ All of healthcare is personal and sensitive...

Guidelines to Follow...1

6

- Use people-first language – avoid labels
- Use “substance use” to describe all substances
- Avoid: abuse, dependence, addict, user, former, dirty, reformed, clean, habit – all of these have a layer of judgment built into the term
 - None of these words are motivating
- Limit your reaction to responses that describe how much or how often a substance is used
- Limit your reaction to responses describing how the person uses

Guidelines to Follow...2

7

- Be positive and encouraging
- Recognize and affirm that substance use disorders are legitimate health conditions
- Accept that there are always positive aspects of use from the patient's perspective
- Avoid harsh confrontations – try to get clients/patients to explore the costs/benefits of change
- Provide the patient information needed for an appropriate intervention
 - Can I tell you a little bit about what I know of substance use?

Importance of Screening

8

- ▶ Every healthcare provider can implement rapid screening and referrals within interprofessional settings
 - ▶ Clerks, pharmacists, social workers, counselors, case managers, technicians, nurses, physicians, aides, dentists, medical students, interns...
- ▶ Has also become a billable service, so more interprofessional settings/managers are interested

Visual Aids

9



- Sometimes it is helpful to have a visual aid present
- Many people struggle to describe what/how many drinks
- Can help with assessment, education and prevention

Using the 3 C's to Understand Patient Use

10

➤ Craving

- Craving, tolerance, withdrawal

➤ Loss of Control

- Larger quantities over a longer period of time
- Unsuccessful attempts to cut back or control use
- Increased time spent buying substance, using substance or recovering from effects

➤ Consequences

- Social or interpersonal problems related to substance use
- Failure to fulfill major obligations
- Activities given up due to substance use
- Use in hazardous situations
- Medical and psychological consequences

Screening Responses

11

Prevention

- 2 or 3: Likely mild issues, some education or prevention may be useful
- Abstinence
- Infrequent Use

Brief Intervention

- 4 or 5: Likely moderate issues, a brief intervention will be useful and could include referrals to another provider for more information
- Problematic or Dangerous Use

Referral to Treatment

- 6 or more: Severe issues are likely present; a formal assessment should be conducted by a professional; provide treatment referrals or case management to help
- Significant medical or psychological consequences of use
- Likely meets criteria for a SUD

Components of Brief Interventions

12

- ▶ Short dialogues between the provider and the patient that typically involve:
 - ▶ Feedback
 - ▶ Client engagement
 - ▶ Simple advice or brief counseling
 - ▶ Goal-setting
 - ▶ Follow-up
- ▶ Respect for autonomy of patient and their goals and values
- ▶ Importance, confidence and readiness to change must be taken into account
- ▶ Ambivalence is common
- ▶ Targets are selected by the patient, not the “expert”
- ▶ Expert is the provider of information
- ▶ Be empathic, non-judgmental, respectful

Positive Outcomes of Brief Interventions

13

- ▶ Starting to think about reducing
- ▶ Temporary reduction or cessation of use
- ▶ Agreeing to accept referral
- ▶ Permanent reduction or cessation

How to Prepare for Treatment Referrals

14

- Referrals are necessary when formalized assessment and treatment are warranted
 - Also when a person requires level of care beyond the interprofessional setting's capabilities
- Know your healthcare community provider specialties
 - Physicians, psychologists, counselors, social workers, therapists
- Have a current listing of substance use disorder treatment centers/providers available
- Develop effective relationships with referral sources
- Personalized/assisted referrals work better
- Have information about local self-help, 12-Step and other recovery programs in your area

Summary

15

- Treatment works, recovery is possible
 - Brief interventions and referrals work
 - Non-judgmental and friendly manner
 - Destigmatized language is a key component
- Your language can differ between patient and interprofessional interactions
- “New” information is useful
 - Sometimes clients/patients are unaware of health consequences, serving sizes, interaction effects, harms ... related to substance use
 - All people can benefit from responsible use messaging
- Our goal is to prevent more severe health and social consequences
 - Reduce stigma, motivate engagement and enhance health outcomes

Contact Information:

16

- Zach Sneed, Ph.D., CRC, LCDC, BC-TMH
- 3B313, 3601 4th Street, STOP 6225
- Lubbock, TX 79430-6225
- Phone: (806) 743-4274
- Email: Zach.sneed@ttuhsc.edu
- Program Director / Assistant Professor, Addiction Counseling – School of Health Professions
- Clinical Assistant Professor, Psychiatry – School of Medicine