The Effects Precipitated By Alcohol Use Disorder
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Purpose
To inform nursing students about the true impact of alcohol use disorder (AUD) in a holistic way so they can learn what they can do to help mitigate its effects.

Introduction
• AUD is a medical condition in which the individual is unable to control or stop their alcohol use even if it causes them physical, psychological, social, and occupational harm (NIAAA, 2021a).
• Millions of people in the USA, including minors, have AUD and their lives affect countless others in their families and communities.

Physiological and Psychological Effects
• Contributes to over 60 medical conditions: all types of cancers, hypertension, heart disease, liver cirrhosis, etc. (Iranpour & Nakhaee, 2019).
• Alcohol use increases the incidence of depression, anxiety, irritability, suicide, interpersonal violence, and assaults (Iranpour & Nakhaee, 2019).

Effect on Families
• Dysfunctional households, inadequate parenting, and child maltreatment hurts children and many lack a trusted adult for social support.
• Nearly 1 in 10 American children under age 18 live with a parent who has AUD (NIAAA, 2021b).
• Alcohol use is a major contributor to child maltreatment. 11% of cases in the general population is because of alcohol usage. (Freisthler et al., 2020)
• Stressful experiences -> ACEs

Effect on Communities
• Child maltreatment damages the mental wellbeing of children and when left untreated, it can worsen their productivity in society.
• They are at risk for delinquent behavior because of their ACEs
• Children are our future.
• What happened during their childhood has repercussions on their future. Our future.

Stigma
• Alcoholics are bad, weak people with a personality issue, who aren't taking the needed actions to live a moral, upstanding life.
• Their identity as a person is devalued.
• In 2019, only 7.2% of those with AUD received treatment (NIAAA, 2021b).
• Many deny their alcohol issue.
• They remain untreated.
• The situation is worsened by the lack of social support for this disorder in the general population.

Other Barriers
• The family may be making it difficult for the individual to stop drinking.
• The public lacks relevant knowledge about AUD.

Risk Factors
• Availability of alcohol, i.e., alcohol retail sellers
• Local alcohol advertisements and other cues
• Genetics
• LGBTQ+ youth population
• Culture

Nursing Considerations
• Assess safety of the household
• Assess the home environment
• Assess how the family and children are coping with the addict’s behavior
• To counter stigma:
  • Educate patients, families, communities on what AUD actually entails:
    • A medical disorder, a brain disease
    • Not a character flaw
    • AUD affects everyone, either directly or indirectly
    • Educate on what those effects are
    • Social support is a vital factor in successful treatment
• Cultivate a supportive, beneficial family, home, and social environment
• The family may be contributing to the addict’s continued drinking
• Assess how the addict’s behaviors relates to their social environment
• If individual is refusing treatment, the nurse must keep the family in mind:
  • Assess their emotional distress, mental health, and how they adapted
  • Refer to Al-Anon support group
  • Coping skills training
  • Anger management techniques
  • Emphasize that it is up to the addict to make the choice to stop

References: