



Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences Section – 2009

I14 Special Topics in Forensic Addiction Medicine: Relevancy, Criminal Law, and Adolescent Populations

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After attending this presentation, attendees will be able to recognize the usefulness and applicability of addiction expertise in the forensic behavioral sciences. Attendees will also learn relevant case law affecting legal decision-making in the context of addiction and intoxication, and utilize interventional and treatment strategies directed towards adolescents with substance use disorders.

This presentation will impact the forensic community by encouraging expertise in addiction medicine, particularly as it applies to forensic behavioral science. This will include a discussion of the relevancy of such expertise, history of case law development in the field, and applicability of treatment concepts in a specific, unique population.

Substance use disorders and intoxication are pervasive in mental health and criminal populations. Up to 80% of incarcerated and arrested populations in the United States have had a history significant for substance use disorders. Community costs exceed hundreds of millions of dollars each year which are directly attributable to drug and alcohol use. Creation of special drug courts within many jurisdictions has been initiated, in part, because of the pervasive nature of substance use disorders within the judicial system.

Substance use disorders, significantly debilitating illnesses, are associated with violent crimes, drug diversion, child abuse, exacerbation of mental illness, personality disorders, poor social functioning, poverty, domestic violence, and multiple causes of unexpected death. They are predictive of a high rate of criminal recidivism, and increase risk factors such as disinhibition and aggression. Substance abuse treatment has been shown to decrease criminal behavior, morbidity, and violence.

Despite these facts, there is little professional training in addictive disorders offered to behavioral clinicians and forensic scientists. Specialized proficiency in the addiction field is even less common. Therefore, expertise in addiction medicine is a valid and important goal of training within the field of forensic behavioral sciences. As the subject has broad ramifications involving aspects of presentation, prognosis, etiology, treatment, evaluation, behavioral correlation, and interaction with the legal system, three useful topics were chosen for presentation.

Dr. Bunt, faculty member of the Division of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse at the NYU School of Medicine, and medical director of Daytop Village, a highly successful therapeutic community, will present compelling evidence for the need of addiction expertise within forensic psychiatry. Understanding addictive disorders and its application enhances the credibility, and effectiveness of the forensic scientist.

Dr. De Crisce, faculty member of the Division of Forensic Psychiatry at the NYU School of Medicine, and a forensic psychiatrist performing risk assessments for child protective services and of sexual offenders will review aspects of substance use disorders which impact on criminal law. Consideration of addiction and intoxication might be involved in assessments of competency, diminished capacity, fitness for duty, parental rights, dangerousness, malpractice, and involuntary commitment.

Dr. Rosner, renowned director of the NYU-Bellevue Forensic Psychiatric Court Clinic, director of the NYU Forensic Psychiatric Training Program, author, and forensic psychiatric leader will discuss special considerations of addiction medicine within the adolescent population. There is a clear relationship between substance use and emotional and behavioral problems, involving delinquent, aggressive and criminal behaviors in adolescents. Much of the United States incarcerated adult population began problematic behavior in their adolescent years, associated with substance use, which has been subsequently related to adult criminality. Intervention, evaluation, and treatment are crucial to prevent adverse outcomes.

Addiction Medicine, Forensic Psychiatry, Adolescent Chemical Dependency