

would be most helpful to you and request a referral.

The road to recovery, for most people, is slow and gradual. It often involves several strategies and supports along the way.

Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission (AADAC) can be of service. The nearest location to you can be found in your phone book.

Taking care of your general mental and physical health is important:

- Pay attention to the basics such as sleep, nutrition, rest, exercise and meaningful activity.
- Find a solid network of support. This can include family, friends and people who are experiencing similar problems.
- Prioritize the importance of the events on your life. Focus on what really matters.

Where can you get more information?

- Ask your doctor or nurse
- Call Health Link - 408-5465
- AADAC Help Line 1-866-332-2322

Notes

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MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS
(Concurrent Disorder)

Information for Patients and Families

Mental Health Programs

Grey Nuns Community Hospital & Misericordia Community Hospital

What does Concurrent disorder mean?

Concurrent disorder refers to individuals who have psychiatric symptoms or mental health problems and addictions issues. This has also been referred to as Dual diagnosis. It has been known for some time that mental health issues and addiction issues affect each other.

An addiction is a state of dependence on something. The addiction issues can include: alcohol, abuse of drugs, gambling problems, sexual behaviour, compulsive shopping and other repetitive behaviours that have negative consequences.

There are different thoughts regarding concurrent disorders and there is still a lot of information to be understood about the relationship between mental health and addictions.

Some individuals are aware of having a mental health issue and engage in a repetitive self defeating behaviour, for example using drugs or alcohol, in order to alter an unpleasant state. This can be referred to as self-medicating.

Some individuals who are aware of an addiction also find mental health symptoms worsen or become pronounced after a period of time. There is a great deal of research to suggest that abuse of substances lead to mental health symptoms. For example, it is common knowledge that alcohol is a depressant. Despite possibly feeling good while drinking alcohol, most report a worsening of depressive symptoms if the drinking persists.

Addictions can mimic or mask mental health symptoms or cause mental health symptoms, for example paranoid disorder due to prolonged cocaine use.

How is Concurrent Disorder treated?

Making an accurate assessment of mental health problems is difficult when patients are using recreational drugs, abusing alcohol or over the counter medications. The misuse of prescription medication can also be very problematic. It is important to have a thorough assessment, both physical and mental. Your doctor may

direct you to a mental health specialist as well as an addictions counselor.

The addiction needs to be stopped first so mental health issues can be treated with medication and/or therapy. Complications will likely occur if an individual is taking medication prescribed by a doctor at the same time as using street drugs and/or alcohol.

An honest and open conversation with your doctor can be the first step toward healthier living.

There are various therapies available for both addiction and mental health issues. Many people find involvement in therapy for addiction and therapy for mental health issues bring the best outcomes. Improving our coping skills and developing new ways to cope with stress helps both mental health symptoms and addiction behaviours. For example, relaxation techniques can alleviate anxiety as well as stave off urges. Re-framing thought patterns that lead to addictive behaviour can also be applied to improve mood. Talk to your doctor or mental health specialist about what

