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# Alternative Treatment Options for Substance Use Disorder in Rural Areas

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ALTERNATIVE TREATMENT OPTIONS FOR SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER IN  
RURAL AREAS

by

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B.S., B.A., Southern Illinois University Carbondale, 2015

A Research Paper

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RESEARCH PAPER APPROVAL

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A Research Paper Submitted in Partial

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Approved by:

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TITLE: ALTERNATIVE TREATMENT OPTIONS FOR SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER IN RURAL AREAS

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Thomas D. Upton

It is apparent that drug and alcohol use are becoming an epidemic in the United States of America. The repercussions of substance use disorder are having a major impact on society as a whole. As people continue to face this battle, an increasing number of individuals are losing their lives to addiction. Moving forward, it is important that society, as a whole, learn to acknowledge the changes that need to be made. Although typical treatment is somewhat effective, it would be beneficial to make use of alternative treatments, in an attempt to reach out to the underserved populations.

## DEDICATION

Thank you to God for leading me here, placing in my life the people that I have needed, and giving me the strength to endure the hardships of life.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Drug and alcohol addiction is an ever growing problem in the United States. The group of people that have Substance Use Disorder have been labeled “addicts” and this disorder is often viewed as a problem that the person has brought on themselves. As this epidemic becomes a problem that can no longer be ignored, many studies have been done addressing the possible treatment options for people who struggle with substance use disorders. Inpatient and outpatient treatment are commonly used to address Substance Use Disorder. In addition, many people who struggle with addiction have taken part in 12-step programs and anonymous support groups to aide in their personal recovery.

Although treatment is very difficult process for any person that is trying to gain recovery, it can be an even more daunting task for people in rural areas. Although there are billions of dollars being spent on addiction and substance abuse as a whole, a very small portion is being used to prevent and treat substance use disorder. The cost of treatment and lack of funding plays a role in individuals seeking treatment, especially in rural, sparsely populated areas of the United States of America. Oser et al. (2012) notes that there are a limited number of treatment facilities in rural areas (Oser et al., 2012, p.568). Although accessibility to treatment facilities is one major issue, there are many factors that may stand in the way of people with substance use disorder residing in rural areas seeking services. The expense of utilizing a substance abuse treatment program may be difficult. Overall, it is hard to pinpoint specific ways to improve treatment for people in rural areas because the barriers to treatment are complex and

unique to each person. Examining the treatment options that are available for people with Substance Use Disorder allows service providers to use traditional treatment, as well as newer evolving treatment. Using both, traditional treatment and new treatments that have recently been discovered could make the overall treatment process much more beneficial and effective than using only one specific treatment.

### **Background information — Substance Use Disorder**

Substance use disorder is a term that has been more commonly used in recent years; however, addiction and abuse of drugs and alcohol is a problem that has plagued the United States of America for decades. When thinking about substance use disorder, it is incredibly important to recognize symptoms of this disorder. It is extremely common for people in rural areas to overlook addiction issues. Living a life of alcoholism and substance abuse is many times viewed as the norm in certain cultures. In addition, people who reside in small communities may not recognize the issues that their loved ones are facing. It is difficult for close friends and family to see when there is a problem and, often times, even more difficult to admit that help is needed. *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 5th Edition (DSM-V)* notes some behaviors related to substance use may include impaired control, as well as social impairments. A person with substance use disorder may also spend a large amount of time obtaining and using the substance of their choice. In addition, the person may display risky behaviors and symptoms of withdrawal (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p 483-484). These symptoms, among other, may be easy for family members to notice and detect early. When these behaviors are exhibited, it is an indication that the individual is likely to be in need of substance abuse treatment services.



When working with people with substance use disorders, it is also very important to recognize the barriers to treatment that they could potentially face. As the world has evolved, so has the face of substance abuse treatment. Simpson et al. (2011) describe the evolution of substance abuse treatment in eras, beginning with evaluations and community-based treatment in the 1960s. Following the first era, professionals began building a solid treatment process, then moving into establishing evidence based practices for treatments (Simpson et al., 2011, p. 1734-1736). As technology makes more advancements, treatment options will continue to grow and become more flexible to meet the needs of diverse populations.

### **Significance of the Study**

At this point in time, rural areas are generally underserved in reference to mental health and substance use disorder. As the demand for treatment in rural areas gets even higher, it is important to identify successful treatment methods that will allow service providers to reach out to those in rural communities. Examining alternative treatments for people who do not live in densely populated urban areas may allow people with substance use disorders in rural areas to obtain treatment. Drug and alcohol addiction has spread rapidly throughout the country. In the United States of America, there were 20.8 million people ages twelve and older that met the criteria for Substance Use Disorder in 2015 (SAMHSA). As this disorder spreads, it not only affects the lives of the individual themselves, but thousands more, who may provide care to those with addiction issues or perhaps the loved ones of the individuals with this painful disorder.

Although the readiness to change and willingness to participate in treatment is the responsibility of the individual with substance use disorder, it is also important to fully understand the roll that the service provider plays. In this particular instance, it has been acknowledged that rural areas do not obtain needed treatment. This lack of treatment should encourage service providers and treatment facilities to make the needed accommodations to reach out and serve underrepresented groups of people in the United States of America.

### **Purpose of the Research Paper**

The information reviewed here will take a closer look at the effectiveness of treatment centers for people with substance use disorders that reside in rural areas. Although treatment duration may vary between clients, this specific means of treatment may be more effective if combined with other alternative treatment.

The purpose of this research is to discover wether traditional treatment facilities are successful in treating people with substance use disorders in rural areas. In this review of literature, there will be a focus on identifying treatment options that may be successful, specifically in rural areas. Determining new treatments that could benefit people with substance use disorder is urgent. This is not to say that traditional inpatient and outpatient treatment should not be used; however, using technology to help decrease the barrier of living in a rural area could make these treatments more effective and help people who struggle with addiction maintain recovery. This review of literature will allow service providers to look at data collectively and perhaps take a more holistic approach to treating individuals with substance use disorder. Rather than using the traditional treatments that are most commonly used, this may encourage providers to

look at treatment options that are new and evolving, to better meet the needs of their clients.

## **DEFINITION OF TERMS**

*12-Step Groups* — a method of achieving sobriety in which an individual would go through the processes of twelve stages that would lead to recover. This is most commonly associated with the Alcoholics Anonymous program.

*Abstinence* — the practice of restraining oneself from partaking in something, in this case substance specifically.

*Overdose* — the excessive use of a drug that causes serious bodily harm and may result in death.

*Recovery* — maintaining abstinence from substances that have impaired functioning substantially in the past.

*Relapse* — returning to substance use after maintain abstinence for a period of time.

*Self Help Group* — a group of people who share similar experiences and issues that provide support and encouragement to one another.

*Stigma* — harsh judgement or shame associated with a specific person, activity, circumstance, or quality.

*Substance* — any drug or reality altering matter that can be consumed or used by a person to obtain some type of high.

*Substance Use Disorder* — addiction to a substance, in which the person is not able to stop the use.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The occurrence of Substance Use Disorder is growing all over the United States of America. Especially in rural areas, the prevalence of this disorder does not seem to be slowing down, which make it even more imperative that effective treatment be identified to meet the needs of those in less populated areas. The cost of treatment, is a popular topic when discussing treatment for Substance Use Disorder. Although there are significant financial costs, there are also costs acquired to the individual, their family, and society that outweigh the financial burden. At this time, there are many traditional treatment options that are available to those in need; however, often overlooked are the more evolving treatment options for people with Substance Use Disorder. As new treatments are developed and technology continues to make advancements, it is important to consider new treatment options. For people that cannot easily access treatment as a result of geographic location, lack of transportation, or any other barrier that may stand in the way, new ways to access services will be beneficial. Identifying barriers to treatment and indicators of potential relapse is a vital part of the recovery process. All of these points should be considered when treating the rural population that struggles with Substance Use Disorder. Throughout the pages to follow, prevalence, cost of treatment, traditional treatment, evolving treatment, and barriers to treatment will be discussed in further detail.

#### **Prevalence**

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), in 2015, 20.8 million people in the United States of America met the criteria

for having Substance Use Disorder based on use in the past year. Breaking down the people who have met the criteria for Substance Use Disorder, 15.7 million met the criteria for alcohol use disorder. In addition, 7.7 million people met the criteria for Substance Use disorder based on their illicit drug use and another 4 million people due to their marijuana use. With much smaller numbers, prescription pain relievers, cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin, and prescription stimulants also contributed to the large number of the population that could meet criteria for a Substance Use Disorder (SAMHSA). Regardless of the particular substance that may be being abused, this huge group of people have one thing in common, the struggle with addiction.

The *DSM-V* indicates people between the ages of 18 and 24 have high prevalence rates for nearly every substance (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 487). In addition, the *DSM-V* breaks down the use of specific substances to identify the demographics of individuals that are using at the highest rates. Alcohol use disorder is more prevalent among adult men at 12.4% and is seen to be more common among Native Americans and Alaska Natives with 12.1% (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 493). Similarly, adult males are more likely to struggle with cannabis use disorder taking up 2.2% and the disorder is most prevalent, again, in Native Americans and Alaska Natives at 3.4% (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p.512). Following the trend, opioid use disorder is also more common in adult men, with a smaller margin of 0.49% being men versus 0.26% being women (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 543). The *DMS 5* continues to break down the specific substance use disorders and show what populations are most affected in each category. Having this information allows service providers to better understand the populations that they could

potentially be working with if they are in a certain area or in a specific field of substance abuse treatment.

It is important to recognize the number of people who struggle with a substance use disorder, but it is also vital to recognize the lives that are impacted indirectly by this disorder. A growing number of people die each year as a result of drugs and alcohol. According to the NIH: National Institute on Drug Abuse, over 50,000 people died from drug overdose in 2015 (NIH). The number of people dying from overdose has steadily increased each year since 2002. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) notes that there are over 38 million adults in the United States of America who report binge drinking four times per month on average. The CDC adds that around 2,200 people lose their lives to alcohol poisoning each year (CDC). These numbers make it extremely obvious that there is a problem that needs to be addressed. Recognizing that this disorder not only impairs the person's life, but also has the potential to end their life should help service providers understand why the demand for treatment in underserved areas is so high.

## **Cost of Treatment**

Often times, the cost of treatment is viewed from a strictly financial perspective. Although it is true, substance abuse treatment is occupying millions of dollars, it is also apparent that the cost of no treatment may be even higher to those that are affected by Substance Use Disorder. It is fairly easy to access the financial cost of treatment; however, it is much more difficult to gage the cost to family, friends, and society. That is definitely not to say there is no cost other than financial, it is just more difficult to understand.

In reference to financial cost, this country spends an astronomical amount of money on Substance Use Disorder related treatments and incidences. According to NIH: National Institute on Drug Abuse, tobacco, alcohol, and drug abuse cost the United States of America over \$700 billion annually. This expense includes a variety of things related to substance abuse, ranging from crimes to health care (NIH). As for specific treatments for Substance Use Disorder, it is likely that there are funds going towards inpatient and outpatient treatment facilities, treatment programs within prisons and detention center, and drug courts, to name a few. Unfortunately, The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse brings to light that the federal, state, and local governments alone spend close to \$500 billion on addiction and substance abuse each year; however, only two cents of every dollar that is spent goes to prevention and treatment (CASA). This means, the majority of government dollars spent on substance use disorder is more geared toward punishments and resolution of crimes, rather than preventing and treating the chronic disorder.

With such a tremendous amount of time being put into developing successful substance abuse treatments, it is often questioned whether or not the it is worth the outcomes that are achieved. In a study conducted by Shadow et al. (2012), it was found that generally the cost-effectiveness of treatment improved as the intensity of treatment interventions increased (Shadow et al., 2012, p. 84). This provides insight into the worth of the treatment. Although it may be expensive to receive intense substance abuse treatment, it truly is worth the amount of money that is spent. Overall, the finding in these studies remind all individuals involved in substance abuse

treatment, whether it may be the service provider, family member, or individual themselves, that the benefits of treatment far outweigh the costs.

## **Traditional Treatment**

Generally, it is difficult for individuals with substance use disorder to seek treatment. The difficulties that people face when seeking treatment can include financial resources and stigma. However, the process of obtaining treatment can be even more difficult in rural areas. Falck et al. notes a large unmet need for treatment among the rural population (Falck et al., 2007, p.113). Accompanying these unmet needs are thousands of individuals who have tried treatment with unsuccessful results or heard negative reviews from others regarding traditional treatments. There are a multitude of factors that may impact the persons willingness to seek treatment. However, it is the treatment provider's responsibility to make the treatment accessible to a variety of clients when an individual with substance use disorder has made the decision to participate in treatment.

When referencing traditional treatment options, people often think of residential facilities, out-patient treatment, and even treatment services that might be available in a prison setting. These treatment options will be considered traditional treatment as these options are the most commonly used in the United States of America. Specifically, residential treatment facilities are commonly used to treat substance use disorder in adults. James et al. (2015) conducted a study that provided information on evidence based practices within residential treatment centers. Overall, the study found that there was a move toward evidence based practice and a generally positive attitude toward the successful outcomes that are provided to individuals within residential treatment



centers. This shows that, in general, residential treatment facilities are centering their treatment programs around interventions that have been supported by research (James et al., 2015, p. 161-162). Participating in a residential treatment program can look differently for each client. For example, the length of an individual's stay in a residential treatment center will vary between clients. However, in a study performed by Shin et al. (2011), it was identified that longer treatment duration was a factor in predicting reduced drug use after treatment (Shin et al., 2011, p. 341). Residential treatment centers are beneficial in removing the individual from their typical daily routine, which will allow them to focus on recovery.

Residential treatment also allowed the individual with substance use disorder to identify goals that they have for their lives and devise a plan to accomplish their goals. Holman and Loughran (2013) conducted a study to examine the needs of female clients in residential treatment facilities. The results of this study showed that women in residential treatment facilities were most concerned with gaining skills to help them abstain from drugs and alcohol, learn how to problem solve, and build healthy relationships (Holman & Loughran, 2013, p. 7). Knowing the hopes that each individual has for the treatment program will help the counselors and other service providers meet the specific needs of each client.

Nonresidential treatment programs are also used for substance abuse treatment across the United States. As it becomes more common to utilize nonresidential programs, it is important to identify ways that they can be the most effective in gaining successful treatment outcomes. According to Shin et al. (2011), there is a huge emphasis placed on the relationship that is built between the client and the provider as

a predictor of treatment outcome (Shin et al., 2011, p. 343). This suggests that in order for individuals with substance use disorders to gain recovery, the connections made with the service provider is crucial. As service providers, it extremely beneficial to invest in building a healthy working relationship with clients in hopes that they will be able to achieve recovery longterm.

Treatment for substance use disorder is often known to occur throughout an individual's prison stay. Although this is not at all ideal, treatment programs are often times mandatory for people who have been convicted of drug related crimes and meet the criteria for a substance use disorder. Continuing to stay on the path to recovery after being released from prison is difficult for many people. This may be due to the lack of continuing treatment after being released. Staton-Tindall et al. (2011) revealed in a study that focused on the use of treatment after reentering the community, that people living in metropolitan areas were more likely to obtain treatment within the community (Staton-Tindall et al., 2011, p. 386). The rural population was less likely to seek services after being released. It was hypothesized that this could be related to accessibility of treatment facilities based on geographic location. This tells service providers exactly where there is a need for more treatment.

## **Evolving Treatment**

Traditional treatments that are commonly used in treating Substance Use Disorder have been successful in many cases. Although there have been victories for traditional treatment options, it is important that society does not overlook the individuals who did not maintain successful recoveries. In acknowledging the shortcoming of traditional, inpatient and outpatient, treatment, it is possible to find new strategies that

could assist those that did not find traditional treatment effective. Baca et al. suggests the use of telecounseling as a contemporary way of treating alcohol use disorder. In her article, she proposes using this long-distance counseling as a means of reaching out to the rural population that is often underserved (Baca et al., 2007, p. 34). Using the technology that is available to most people in society can be a way to bridge the gap between service providers and the rural population.

The idea that technology can be used to provide services to people with Substance Use Disorder is not exactly unheard of. In a similar study to that mentioned above, conducted by Benavides-Vaello et al.(2013), there was a focus placed on the idea of using Telehealth to increase the quality of service that individuals receive. The term Telehealth can include health care, as well as health information and education. This study found that using Telehealth is effective in delivering substance abuse treatment. In fact, it was noted that many client preferred this method of treatment because of the convenience and feeling of confidentiality that they had while utilizing the services (Benavides-Vaello et al., 2013, p. 115). The feeling of confidentiality may stem from not being seen in a public place that is known for treating addiction. Since stigma is a major barrier to treatment and it is known that in rural areas it can be extremely difficult to keep information private, this may be a solution that many people with substance us disorder are looking for as they seek out treatment. This type of treatment might better serve individuals with disabilities and the poverty stricken rural populations because it offer treatment within their own home. The idea that a person might be able to seek services from their own home could encourage people to obtain the treatment that they know they are in desperate need of.

Another way to utilize substance abuse treatment through technology is using an online treatment program. A study was conducted by Wilson, Gutmann, Embree, and Fraker (2015), that examined the effectiveness of online substance abuse treatment programs for the Deaf. In this study, it was found that the individuals struggling with addiction benefited just as much from the online program than the people who were involved in inpatient treatment programs (Wilson et al., 2015, p. 177). This information sheds light on new, evolving treatments that serve Substance Use Disorder. The use of online treatment programs could alleviate the distance issues that many face in rural areas and, as mentioned above, would increase the perceived confidentiality within the treatment process. Although this study was initially conducted to meet the needs of the Deaf population, it could also generalize to other groups of people across the country.

There is no doubt that each individual that seeks treatment for substance use disorder will have their own concerns, challenge, and strengths. That being said, in order to have a successful treatment outcome it is crucial that each person be treated individually. In an article written by C. E. West, it is proposed that the focus of substance abuse treatment shift more towards wellness rather than the problems that each individual is facing (West, 2010, p. 179). In shifting the focus to wellness and recovery, it will allow the individual to focus on the progress they are making, rather than the mistakes they have made. In addition, this article notes the critical impact that client engagement can make (West, 2010, p. 181). In order to help the client see themselves differently and know that recovery is possible, they need positive interactions with service providers, as well as individuals in the community.

## **Barriers to Treatment**

In order to identify why successful treatment is difficult for people with Substance Use Disorder to achieve, it is important to consider barriers to treatment. Any person, thing, or circumstance that stands in between the person struggling with addiction and the ultimate goal of maintaining recovery, can be considered a barrier to treatment.

One barrier to treatment could be the financial burden that substance abuse treatment might place on the individual or their own family. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 44% of individuals with behavior health conditions, which includes serious mental health, serious psychological distress and substance use disorder, are uninsured yet medicaid eligible (SAMHSA). More specifically, this could be an issue in less populated areas due to the amount of poverty that is typically seen in rural America. Gaining access to services can be especially challenging when the population being served is living in poverty. This particular group of people may be struggling to pay for basic life expenses, without the task of funding substance abuse treatment.

Similarly, it may be difficult for individuals that are employed to seek services while maintaining employment. In a study done by Sexton, Carlson, Leukefeld, and Booth, it was noted during an interview with a variety of people seeking substance abuse treatment that they could not regularly attend treatment due to demanding work schedules and the expense of treatment services (Sexton et al., 2008, p. 124). The financial restraints that these people have, create a significant barrier to treatment. The choice to seek treatment rather than maintain their employment may be a decision that many people with substance use disorder are not willing to make. A study conducted by Melvin and Koch (2012) reported that employment was a predictor of successfully

completing treatment. However, it was also noted that many treatment facilities do not include vocational counseling as a part of substance abuse treatment (Melvin & Koch, 2012, p. 34). This allows providers to better understand the desire many of their clients might have to become employed or stay employed throughout treatment programs.

In addition to being low income, people with substance use disorder may also be homeless or find themselves in poor housing conditions. This is another factor of financial restrictions that would play a roll in the successful treatment for these individuals. In a study conducted by Collard, Lewinson, and Watkins (2014), it was found that when individuals resided in supported housing after treatment, they also had higher success rates in maintaining sobriety (Collard, Lewinson, & Watkins, 2014, p. 477). This suggests that individuals who are homeless at the time of recovery will be more susceptible to relapse. Although this is a very large hurdle to cross, knowing the value of employment, as well as housing could help treatment providers and individuals with substance use disorder achieve successful treatment outcomes.

Another barrier to treatment that is commonly seen in rural areas is the lack of transportation, in conjunction with the long distances that may be needed to obtain services in a more urban area. Baca et al. (2007) notes that public transportation is typically sparse at best in rural areas and this too may inhibit the individual from seeking services (Baca et al., 2007, p.33). In rural areas, it is likely that a person may have to travel several miles to reach the nearest treatment facility. If an individual is not in an inpatient treatment program, it will be difficult for them to find transportation to and from the treatment facility for each meeting. In a study by Oser et al. (2012), it was found that over half of the sample population had never participated in treatment, although

that had met the criteria for a substance use disorder (Oser et al., 2012, p. 576). The reason for not utilizing treatment programs could be any of the many barriers that people in rural communities face when seeking services.

As difficult as transportation and distance might be for individuals seeking treatment for Substance Use Disorder, it can be equally difficult for the person to overcome the stigma that they might face. The stigma that is attached to Substance Use Disorder is great and can be a huge barrier to treatment for people that desperately need services. Sexton et al. note social barriers to treatment in rural areas that include stigma, as well as negative reviews from people who had already participated in treatment (Sexton et al., 2008, p. 124-125). Stigma and negative reports from other in small communities can be enough to convince people, that are considering treatment, not to follow through with the idea. Although these barriers are also present in urban areas, the culture of a rural area makes these issues more pressing to the individuals with addiction issues. It would not be uncommon for a small community to gain knowledge of an individual seeking substance abuse treatment very quickly. The fear of this happening could deter individuals from seeking needed services. In a study conducted by Jackson and Shannon, that examined the barriers to treatment for pregnant women in rural areas, the number one barrier that affected over half of the sample population was described as acceptability (Jackson & Shannon, 2012, p. 1767). The category of acceptability, created by the authors, included stigma, which was found to be the primary issue. Often times, it is difficult for people struggling with substance use disorder to overcome what others might think or say about them if they were to seek treatment.

When thinking about stigma, it is common to think about the stigma that an individual faces in reference to the view others have of them. However, there are other instances when stigma can be incorporated into the treatment process by the individual themselves. In a study performed by Luoma, Kuleza, Hayes, Kohlenberg, and Larimer (2014), it was realized that self-stigma may have an impact on the treatment of substance use disorder. Luoma et al. noted a correlation between high self-stigma and longer residential treatment stays (Luoma et al., 2014, p.210). This is to say, individuals who view themselves negatively, are more inclined to have longer residential treatment stays. Luoma et al. also notes the occurrence of high self-stigma being related to low refusal of substance (Luoma et al., 2014, p.210). This negative view of self may have an impact on seeking treatment as well as the successfulness of recovery.

Although these barriers to treatment may seem like very individual occurrence, it is not uncommon for a person to face multiple barriers to treatment. This makes obtaining treatment even more difficult still. Sexton et al. (2008) refer to this as incidence as overlap in barriers (Sexton et al., 2008, p. 126). This suggests that a person may have financial restraints that make it difficult for them to pay for treatment and transportation to travel the distance to the treatment facility. In the event that an individual with Substance Use Disorder was facing multiple barriers, it would be imperative that they seek help to diminish barriers and participate in the treatment that they need in order to achieve successful recovery.

## **Summary of Literature Review**

Substance use disorder becomes a more pressing issue as the prevalence of this disorder grows with each year that passes. The United States of America has some



of the best resources for substance abuse treatment; however, when these services are under funded and under utilized, it does not do as much good as it could. Specifically, in rural, less populated areas, it is clear that treatment options are falling short. This disorder touches lives across the United States of America, both directly and indirectly. Millions of people from different areas, genders, and cultural backgrounds are affected by substance use disorder.

A subject that typically enters into the discussion of substance abuse treatment is the cost that carries. Although treatment programs can be a major expense for the individual with the disorder and their family, the result of not participating in treatment could be death. It was noted in the literature above that although many dollars are spend on substance abuse, very few are allocated for treatment and prevention of this devastating disorder.

As the need for treatment grows, it is crucial that individuals with substance use disorder find treatment options that meet their specific needs. Overtime, research has shown that traditional substance abuse treatment can lead to successful outcomes for people with substance use disorder. Although this is true, there are still people who do not seek services or are not successful in maintaining recovery. For the group of people that are in this situation, there are other, new and innovative, treatment options that may fit their needs.

As the literature shows, it is not necessarily the effectiveness of treatment that is the primary issue. Instead, the problem may be found in the ever growing number of barriers that people with substance use disorder face when seeking treatment. Especially in the rural population, barriers to treatment can be devastating to the

person's recovery. If these barriers are not removed they can create an obstacle to treatment and recovery that the person may never be able to overcome. Without the occurrence of barriers to treatment, it would be much more likely that individuals with substance use disorder would seek treatment.

## **Interpretation of Material**

The prevalence of substance use disorder is not slowing down. Each year more people than the year before meet the criteria for a substance use disorder. Along with a growing prevalence there is a dangerous threat of overdose that accompanies that. Although it is known that the cost of treatment for substance abuse treatment can be very expensive, with the number of people dying from this devastating disorder, it is clear that the benefits of prevention and treatment outweigh the costs that are acquired. It is crucial to remember that many lives are being affected by this disorder, and it is very possible for service providers to reach out and make a difference in the lives of others.

Although traditional treatments are effective, there are several people whose needs are not being met by the treatments available. There are several reasons that a person might not be in treatment; however, the rural population is incredibly underserved. From the research reviewed above, it seems obvious that there are new treatments being developed that could change the outcome of treatment or allow people the opportunity to participate in treatment that reside in rural areas. Service providers should embrace the new avenues of treatment and use these alternative options to their advantage.

The barriers that people who struggle with substance use disorder face are incredible hurdles to obtaining treatment. There is a need for service providers to acknowledge these barriers and work together with the client to overcome the obstacles in the way of treatment. Although barriers will be unique to each individual, this is not something that the person should have to face alone.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

#### **Implications and Conclusions**

Rural areas are in need of treatment options that reach out to them. It is vital for service providers and counselors to meet a person where they are in their life at the time to create a working relationship that will lead to recovery. Therefore, expecting an individual to overcome several barriers alone to seek treatment is unfair. Service providers must work with clients to identify barriers to treatment and recovery to ensure a successful outcome. Service providers need to be willing to go the extra mile for underserved population. The barriers to treatment that are considered in this review of literature are geared toward the population of rural people who meet the criteria for a substance use disorder. However, the problematic issues caused by barriers to treatment are not exclusive to the rural population.

Overall, it is clear that there are interventions that could provide successful treatment to people with substance use disorder. From information collected regarding traditional and evolving treatment, it is likely that treatment may be most effective when used in combination to meet the needs of the individual. A clear implication of the research that has been reviewed indicates that if combined, traditional and new evolving treatment has the potential to truly change lives. The evolving treatments incorporate technology into the treatment and thus extend the bridges needed to provide treatment to underserved populations.

Although it is clear that the responsibility to change does lie in the hands of the individual with addiction issues, the role that a service provider can play is crucial. As

the problem with addiction grows in the United States of America, it becomes more obvious that this is not an issue that only impacts a few people. Whether addiction impacts the individual, the family, the friends, or the coworkers, it is making an impact on most of the American population. This huge impact makes it even more clear that service provider and any person impacted by addiction need to be diligent in seeing the signs and symptoms associated with Substance Use Disorder and addressing them quickly.

## **Recommendations**

An in depth study is needed to gain a more solid understanding of how rural populations can be reached in specific areas. It is likely that there are several ways that service providers could bridge the gap between treatment and the rural population. In addition, it may be beneficial for treatment centers to take an in-depth look at the specific people they are serving, as individuals, to discover the needs they might have post treatment. More research needs to be done in order to identify alternative treatment options for people in diverse populations.

After reviewing research on this topic, it might be wise for service providers to develop a clear plan to meet the needs of the rural areas that may be nearest to them. Having outreach programs that would extend a hand to the populations that are not being served could save lives and better the communities as a whole. As service providers develop programs that will provide more opportunities and awareness to rural areas, it may also be beneficial for the facilities to find better ways to incorporate technology resources into the outreach. It is exciting to consider the possibilities that

could occur if treatment providers used the internet to really reach out into smaller populations and make a difference.

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