



Treatment Works: Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder **By Ray Young**

One in five Americans have a mental health illness. One in 17 lives with a serious mental illness such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder.

A mental illness is a condition that affects a person's thinking, feeling or mood. Such conditions may affect someone's ability to relate to others and function each day.

One in five teens lives with a mental health condition and yet more than half are not getting the help they need.

Recovery, including meaningful roles in social life, church, school, and work, is possible, especially when individuals start treatment early and play a strong role in their own recovery process.

Nationally, we are in the midst of an opioid epidemic. The latest federal data on deaths related to drug overdoses indicate that 200 Americans will die from drug overdoses each day. That's 6,000 parents, children, family, friends and coworkers, gone during October, Substance Abuse Prevention Month.

Drug overdose deaths now outpace mortality rates for gun-related fatalities, car crashes and HIV/AIDS. The sharpest increase in deaths was related to the use of fentanyl and fentanyl analogs (synthetic opioids), accounting for nearly 30,000 overdose deaths.

Mental health professionals have known for decades that substance abuse isn't a weakness or a moral deficiency. Addiction is an illness requiring treatment — like diabetes and cancer — a fact people are now beginning to understand and accept.

Importantly, drug abuse doesn't discriminate. On the contrary, people addicted to drugs — especially opioids — often have normal family histories and "regular" lives, education and stable jobs, until something happens — perhaps an injury for which painkillers are prescribed, or when overwhelmed by stress and anxiety — and the cycle of addiction begins.

We don't yet know what pulls an individual over the fine line between controlling his or her physical pain, managing the pressures of young adulthood or handling the loss of a job or home, and falling into addiction.

We do know that treatment works — for mental health illnesses and for substance abuse.

Significant advancements in neuroscience are helping us understand the brain's powerful role in addiction. The National Institute on Drug Abuse reports that discoveries about the brain are producing new treatments that can help people recover and lead productive lives.

Historically, the treatment of those struggling with mental health and substance abuse issues had a "fix them, send them away" mindset.

No more. At Terros Health, the days of caring for patients' physical and mental health in silos are over. Instead, we are our patients' health home, where integrated medical and behavioral health care is a long-term partnership and good health for life is the ultimate goal.

A gold standard for helping those with addiction is using FDA-approved medications combined with counseling and physical health monitoring, a program called Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT). Terros Health wholeheartedly embraces this concept, combining medications with individual, group and family counseling and therapy. MAT has been called the most effective intervention to treat opioid use disorder, more than behavioral interventions or medication alone. We certainly have found that to be true in helping Arizonans with addiction to opioids, alcohol, nicotine and drugs.

Individually, we play an important role. If you suspect someone you love has a substance abuse problem, watch for the signs, including loss of control, neglecting activities, risk-taking, relationship and work issues, secrecy, changing appearance, and withdrawal. Talk with your pastor, your family, and make a plan together to help your loved one get treatment and be there for them.

Note: October is National Substance Abuse Prevention Month and Oct. 23-31 is National Red Ribbon Week, an ideal time for people and communities to unite and take a visible stand against drugs.

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