Journal of Addiction Science

https://doi.org/10.17756/jas.2025-suppl2

Meeting Abstracts

Open Access

Proceedings of the 7th Annual Addiction Professionals Conference (USA 2025)

Speaker Abstracts

Polypharmacy of Seniors: A Prescription for a Substance Use Disorder?

Merrill Norton*

Opioid Response Network Consultant, United States

As we age, the use of multiple medications increases. Those aged 60 and older use the most medications; 37% reported using five or more prescription medications in the past month. Polypharmacy is defined as using five or more medications, while hyper-polypharmacy refers to ten or more. Prescriptions for diabetes, high cholesterol, hypertension, and pain account for more than 45% of all prescriptions in the United States. Research indicates that prescribed medications with potential for substance use disorder among individuals aged 60 and older include benzodiazepines, opioid pain medicines, and medical marijuana. Older adults are more likely to unintentionally misuse medicines by forgetting doses, taking them too often, or taking the wrong amount. More research is needed on the effects of substance use on the aging brain and effective models of care for older adults with substance use disorders.

Ethical Consideration and Compliance in Substance Use Disorder Counseling

Phillip D. Lewis* and Ruben Herron

Langston University, Oklahoma, United States

Ethical decision-making is central to effective treatment for individuals with substance use disorders. Counselors must navigate the complexities of client autonomy, coercion, cultural sensitivity, and therapeutic effectiveness while maintaining compliance with legal and professional standards. This session examined challenges including informed consent, client rights advocacy, multicultural considerations, and counselor self-awareness. Attendees were introduced to culturally responsive tools and evidence-based interventions that support ethical compliance while fostering client resilience, dignity, and growth.

Cultural and Ethical Considerations when Treating Adolescents in Substance Use

Nakia Jones*[1] and Theresa Steele Mitchell[2]

[1]*University of Alabama, Birmingham, United States*

[2]*Planned Counseling & Consulting, United States*

Adolescents face complex challenges when dealing with substance use disorders, compounded by developmental changes and limited access to treatment. In 2023, 96.6% of adolescents aged 12 – 17 diagnosed with substance use disorder did not receive treatment. This session explored emerging cultural issues, ethical standards, and professional practices for addressing adolescent substance use, with emphasis on socioeconomic, racial, and gender influences.

Self-care is an Ethical Obligation

Sekeria Bossie*

Department of Rehab Studies, Alabama State University, Alabama, United States

In the counseling profession, numerous associations and commissions—such as the American Counseling Association and the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification and the National Association for Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Counselors—establish ethical codes that guide practitioners in upholding the integrity and efficacy of their work. A consistent theme across these ethical frameworks is the counselor's obligation to engage in self-care. This ethical imperative is not merely a personal responsibility but a professional necessity, as it directly impacts the counselor's ability to serve clients effectively and efficiently. To fulfill this obligation, counselors must be equipped to recognize both physiological and psychological indicators of burnout and understand how they not only impact the counselor but also how working impaired can negatively the client. Furthermore, counselors must intentionally develop and implement resilience strategies that promote wellness and prevent professional fatigue. Counselor must be willing to explore the ethical foundations of self-care in counseling, recognize the signs of burnout, and holistically assess themselves and their level of functioning. Armed with this information and increased self-awareness, counselors must propose actionable approaches for building resilience within clinical practice.

The Body Remembers: Healing from Generational Trauma Amidst Systemic Oppression

Patti van Eys*

van Eys Mental Health, Alabama, United States

Understanding complex trauma and generational/historical trauma provides depth in conceptualizing adverse childhood experiences and their impact on health outcomes. Building on the original adverse childhood experiences study, this presentation explored how trauma is passed genetically and epigenetically through generations, affecting stress regulation and increasing risk for substance misuse. Participants were introduced to healing-centered engagement and strategies for addressing trauma in culturally responsive ways.

Convergence of Gambling and Gaming: Ethical and Clinical Challenges in the Digital Era

Terri Norwood*

Norwood Counselling & Consulting, Alabama, United States

The convergence of gambling and gaming in digital environments presents complex ethical and clinical challenges for behavioral health professionals. This paper examines the increasingly indistinct boundaries between entertainment and gambling, driven by monetization mechanisms such as loot boxes, pay-to-win features, and esports wagering. These digital behaviors—prevalent across youth and adult populations—are shaped by behavioral reinforcement models and algorithmic engagement strategies, raising critical concerns regarding informed consent, data privacy, and the exploitation of vulnerable users. Clinicians face diagnostic and therapeutic complexities in differentiating between gaming and gambling disorders, managing comorbid conditions, and navigating treatment delivery in digital-first contexts. This analysis incorporates international regulatory frameworks, policy debates, and public health models that inform clinical decision-making and service provision. Evidence-based interventions, including cognitive behavioral therapy, motivational interviewing, and harm reduction strategies, are evaluated alongside emerging screening tools and financial counseling methodologies. The presentation emphasizes ethical decision-making in clinical practice, particularly in balancing client autonomy with protective oversight, managing parental consent in minor populations, and advocating for systemic reform. It concludes with a strategic call to action for counselors to cultivate adaptive competencies, leverage digital tools, and engage collaboratively with policymakers and industry stakeholders to address the accelerating integration of gambling dynamics within gaming ecosystems.

References

1. Boccia M, Piccardi L, Guariglia P. 2015. The meditative mind: a comprehensive meta-analysis of MRI studies. *Biomed Res Int* 2015: 1-11. https://doi.org/10.1155/2015/419808
2. Felitti VJ, Anda RF, Nordenberg D, Williamson DF, Spitz AM, et al. 1998. Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults. *Am J Prev Med* 14(4): 245-258. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0749-3797(98)00017-8
3. Ford JD. 2023. Why we need a developmentally appropriate trauma diagnosis for children: a 10-year update on developmental trauma disorder. *J Child Adol Trauma* 16: 403–418. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40653-021-00415-4
4. Ginwright S. 2018. The Future of Healing: Shifting from Trauma Informed Care to Healing Centered Engagement.
5. Gu Q, Dillon CF, Burt VL. 2010. Prescription drug use continues to increase: U.S. prescription drug data for 2007–2008. *NCHS Data Brief* 42: 1-8.
6. Innes GK, Ogden CL, Crentsil V, Concato J, Fakhouri TH. 2024. Prescription medication use among older adults in the US. *JAMA Intern Med* 184(9): 1121-1123. https://doi.org/10.1001/jamainternmed.2024.2781
7. IQVIA Institute. 2023. The Use of Medicines in the U.S. 2023: Usage and Spending Trends and Outlook to 2027.
8. Menakem R. 2017. My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending our Hearts and Bodies. In Central Recovery Press, United States, pp 1-334.
9. NIDA. 2020. Substance Use in Older Adults DrugFacts.
10. SAMHSA. 2024. 2023 Companion Infographic Report: Results from the 2021, 2022, and 2023 National Surveys on Drug Use and Health.
11. Sulekha S, Thennarasu K, Vedamurthachar A, Raju TR, Kutty BM. 2006. Evaluation of sleep architecture in practitioners of Sudarshan Kriya yoga and Vipassana meditation. *Sleep Biol Rhythms* 4(3): 207-214. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1479-8425.2006.00233.x
12. Wade R, Cronholm PF, Fein JA, Forke CM, Davis MB, et al. 2016. Household and community-level adverse childhood experiences and adult health outcomes in a diverse urban population. *Child Abuse Negl* 52: 135-145. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2015.11.021

Citation: Proceedings of the 7th Annual Addictions Professional Conference (USA 2025). *J Addict Sci* 11(Suppl 2): S1-S3.

Copyright: © 2025. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY) (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) which permits commercial use, including reproduction, adaptation, and distribution of the article provided the original author and source are credited.

Published by United Scientific Group.

Received: September 30, 2025 **Accepted:** October 10, 2025 **Published:** October 13, 2025