

SMART STEPS

TO LIVE LONGER



Mental Illness and Addiction



HEALTHY
MINDS MATTER

Concurrent DISORDERS

When a person has both a mental illness and an addiction at the same time, it's called a concurrent disorder.

Did you know that having a mental illness increases a person's chances of developing an addiction and vice versa? A person with a mental illness is two times more likely to develop an addiction than a person without a mental illness. In fact, 30% of people with a mental illness will develop an addiction (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 2009). Here's why:

- A person with a mental illness may use drugs or alcohol to relieve their symptoms. Over time, this could result in an addiction.
- A person with a serious mental illness, such as schizophrenia, may develop an addiction more easily than a person without this mental illness. This may be because the biological factors (e.g., genetics, brain chemistry) that make a person more prone to developing a serious mental illness may also be the same factors that make a person more prone to developing an addiction.

Similarly, a person with an addiction is four times more likely to develop a mental illness than a person without an addiction. In fact, 53% of people with an addiction, other than an alcohol addiction, will develop a mental illness. Thirty-seven percent (37%) of people with an alcohol addiction will develop a mental illness (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 2009). Here's why:

- A person with an addiction may develop a mental illness as a direct result of the addiction. This is because using drugs or alcohol can cause changes in mood. In some people, these changes can mimic the symptoms of a mental illness, resulting in a substance-induced mental illness.
- A person with an addiction may develop a mental illness as an indirect result of the addiction. For example, a person's marriage could break up as a result of their addiction. That same person could develop a mental illness as a result of the break in their marital status.

WHY

is it Important to Prevent Concurrent Disorders?

Preventing a concurrent disorder from developing is important because it affects a person's quality of life. A person with a concurrent disorder often has more hardships than if they only had one condition or no condition at all.



PEOPLE WITH CONCURRENT DISORDERS:

Are at greater risk of developing other health problems than a person with a mental illness or an addiction alone.

Are more likely to commit suicide. Between 15% to 25% of people who commit suicide have a concurrent disorder (e.g., depression and an alcohol addiction).

Experience higher rates of homelessness. About 19.5% of people who are homeless have a concurrent disorder.

Experience higher rates of involvement in the criminal justice system. Between 2.2% to 11.5% of people who are in jail have a concurrent disorder.

(U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002).

WHAT

can be done to Prevent Concurrent Disorders?

Being a resilient person and achieving positive mental health can help prevent a concurrent disorder from developing.

Resiliency is the ability to effectively cope with, and bounce back from, tough situations (e.g., the loss of a job, the death of a loved one).

Here are some tips to help you become a more resilient person:

- Learn from your mistakes. Try to view setbacks as opportunities to move forward and to learn something new about yourself.
- Be aware of your strengths and weaknesses. Set realistic goals for yourself.
- Be flexible. When things don't go your way, be open to trying a new direction or approach.
- Have a positive outlook. Try to see the good, even in a tough situation.

Positive mental health is the ability to enjoy life, deal with challenges, and contribute to the community.

Here are some tips to help you improve your mental health:

- Create and maintain strong supportive relationships.
- Work at a job that satisfies you and provides you with enough money.
- Find a group or team that interests you and get involved.
- Be physically active every day.
- Eat well and get enough rest.

Have a positive outlook.



HOW

are Concurrent Disorders Treated?

Concurrent disorders can be treated in a number of settings. This chart shows the ideal treatment option for different concurrent disorder combinations:

		MENTAL ILLNESS	
		Mild to Moderate Mental Illness	Serious Mental Illness
ADDICTIONS	Mild to Moderate Addiction	Primary Health Care Provider	Mental Health System
	Serious Addiction	Addiction Treatment System	Specialized Care for Concurrent Disorders

In areas where specialized care for concurrent disorders isn't available, the addiction treatment system and mental health system may work together to get the person the treatment they need. At the treatment centre, a health care professional will decide whether to treat the addiction first, the mental illness first, or the addiction and mental illness at the same time. Two types of treatment that can be used are psychosocial and biological.

Psychosocial Treatments help a patient increase their social understanding and level of knowledge. The different types of psychosocial treatments are listed below.

- *Psychoeducation* educates the patient about their concurrent disorder.
- *Psychotherapy* allows the patient to talk about their mental illness and addiction with a therapist, in an individual or group setting.
- *Peer Support* connects patients with others who also have concurrent disorders and who are dealing with similar issues.

Biological Treatments use medications to treat mental illnesses and addictions. The common types of medications used to treat these conditions are listed below.

Medications Used to Treat Mental Illnesses:

- *Antidepressant medications* are used to treat depression.
- *Anti-anxiety medications* are used to treat anxiety.
- *Mood stabilizers* are used to help reduce mood swings and prevent manic and depressive episodes.
- *Antipsychotic medications* are used to treat psychosis (e.g., delusions, hallucinations).

Medications Used to Treat Addictions:

- *Aversive medications* cause unpleasant side effects when a patient uses the substance they're addicted to.
- *Craving reduction medications* change the way the brain responds to the substance a patient is addicted to, reducing the substance's effect.
- *Substitution medications* reduce or prevent drug cravings and withdrawal symptoms.

If you think you or a loved one has a mental illness, addiction, or concurrent disorder, get help right away. The person in need of help should talk to their health care provider to determine the best treatment method and to find a treatment program. Another way to find help is to visit the following websites:

www.mentalhealthcanada.com



This website, hosted by Mental Health Canada, has information about the different mental health services available across Canada and how to access them.

www.canadadrugrehab.ca



This website, hosted by the Sunshine Coast Health Center and Vancouver Coastal Health, has information about the different addiction services available across Canada and how to access them.

www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hc-ps/pubs/adp-apd/national_inventory-inventaire/index-eng.php



This website, hosted by Health Canada, has information about the different specialized care programs for concurrent disorders available across Canada and how to access them.

TRUE FALSE

- T F** 1. A person may develop a concurrent disorder as a direct or indirect result of an addiction.
- T F** 2. The ideal treatment setting for a person with a mild addiction and a mild mental illness is the mental health system.
- T F** 3. Aversive medications reduce drug cravings.
- T F** 4. A change in a person's sleep pattern is an early warning sign for a mental illness, but not for an addiction.
- T F** 5. A person can build resiliency by learning from their mistakes.
- T F** 6. People who have concurrent disorders experience higher rates of homelessness.

Early IDENTIFICATION

The time between the onset of an addiction in a person with a mental illness (or vice versa) is the time when a concurrent disorder may be prevented. To achieve this, the mental illness or addiction needs to be identified and treated quickly and effectively.

Some early warning signs of a mental illness include:

- Trouble experiencing emotions other than anger, sadness, guilt, worthlessness, or hopelessness.
- Rapid or dramatic shifts in feelings or mood swings.
- Changes in sleep patterns, appetite, or sex drive.
- Loss of interest in going out with friends or family members, or in favourite events or activities.

Some early warning signs of an addiction include:

- Rapid or dramatic shifts in feelings or mood swings.
- Taking part in high-risk behaviours (e.g., drinking and driving, having unprotected sex, stealing).
- Relationship issues (e.g., fighting, secret keeping, distancing) with friends, family, and co-workers.
- Changes in sleep patterns, appetite, and body weight.

There isn't a list of early warning signs that are common to all concurrent disorders combinations.

Answers 1. T, 2. F, 3. F, 4. F, 5. T, 6. T

Resources and WEBSITES

Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse
www.ccsa.ca

Canadian Mental Health Association
www.cmha.ca

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
www.camh.net

Mood Disorders Society of Canada
www.mooddorderscanada.ca

*Here
are some
suggestions
to help your
workplace
understand
and cope with
concurrent
disorders:*

Make it Happen at your WORKPLACE

- Review and update your workplace alcohol and drug and mental health policies as needed. If you don't have these policies in place, look into getting them.
- Educate employees on the different types of help available through your workplace union and human resource department.
- Hold a presentation with an expert on mental health, addiction, and concurrent disorders.
- Increase awareness using educational webinars offered by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health at www.camh.net/education/Online_courses_webinars/mha101/

KEY REFERENCES

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. (2004). *Concurrent substance use and mental health disorders*. Retrieved June 30, 2010, from http://www.camh.net/About_Addiction_Mental_Health/Concurrent_Disorders/Concurrent_Disorders_Information_Guide/concurrent_disorders_info_guide.pdf

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. (2009). *Mental health and addiction 101: Concurrent disorders*. Retrieved June 30, 2010, from http://www.camh.net/education/online_courses_webinars/mha101/concurrentdisorders/Concurrent_Disorders.htm

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2002). *Report to congress on the prevention and treatment of co-occurring substance abuse disorders and mental disorders*. Retrieved August 3, 2010, from <http://www.samhsa.gov/reports/congress2002/index.html>

