Battling Addiction with the Right Approach to Treatment

We hear about the implications of addiction every day—whether it’s news about our country’s war on drugs or the untimely death of a Hollywood star. What we don’t hear enough about is the importance of addiction treatment. In North Carolina, more than 700,000 people age 12 or older report being addicted to alcohol, other drugs, or both. This September marks our 24th year in observance of National Recovery Month. This is a time to remind people that prevention works, the right approach to treatment is effective, and people can and do recover.

For many years, addiction was defined only as the repeated use of a substance, regardless of the adverse consequences likely to result. Only recently, addiction has begun to shed the stigma of being a moral failing, and is being recognized as a genetically-linked chronic disease that can be managed with proper treatment.

Research that tracks individuals in treatment over extended periods shows that most people who get into and remain in treatment stop using alcohol or drugs, decrease their criminal activity and improve their occupational, social and psychological functioning.

Treatment facilities dedicated to recovery that works offer each patient a personalized plan based on level of addiction, personality traits and potential mental disorders. This ensures patients get treatment that is best for them and start out on a path that will lead to lasting recovery.

Conducting a preliminary evaluation to determine which treatment plan is likely to result in a successful recovery is an important first step when admitting patients into treatment. A plan that works for one person may not work for the other, so it’s imperative to learn about a patient’s unique situation before recommending a treatment plan.

But the most important thing to remember is that treatment does not end upon completion of a six-week or even a 12-week program. Just like diabetes or any other chronic disease, ongoing support and treatment is crucial to lasting recovery.

After patients leave a treatment facility, they should never leave their community of support. Once patients complete primary care treatment, they may be referred to extended care, a sober living house or outpatient therapy for ongoing support and guidance. These ongoing services demonstrate a continuum of care that decreases the chance for relapse and increases the chance for lasting recovery.
There are no quick fixes. A positive lasting impact takes empathy, education and time. All people with addictions deserve treatment that works and a chance to live a healthy and fulfilled life.

I encourage each of you to become more educated on addiction and the importance of proper treatment.

Anne Vance
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