Lifting the stigma: Humanizing addiction, when utilizing ACE criteria

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Abstract

Statement of the Problem: Research demonstrates that patients with Substance Abuse Disorders (SUDs) experience substantial stigma-related experiences that negatively impact the feelings, beliefs, and quality of care they receive in clinical settings. Providers can treat patients more humanely when utilizing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) criteria. Studies show that patients with ACEs who have experienced violence, abuse, or neglect as well as witnessed violence in the home or community, and had a family member attempt or died by suicide are linked to chronic health problems, mental illness, and substance use problems in adolescence and adulthood due to the toxic stressors from ACE's can negatively affect children's brain development, immune systems, and stress-response systems. Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: We conducted a study where ACE-related experiences were explored with 58 participants, 25 (43%) were women and 33 (56%) were men. The majority of them identified themselves as Hispanic (36.20%) other participants identified as African American (24.14%), and Caucasian (39.65%). Respondents ranged in age from 18 years old to 64 years old. There were three groups of interest in this study. The first group, is the substance abuse patient, the substance abuse professional, and undergraduate students at Pace University. Findings: The participating patients became more aware of how their childhood experiences have affected them, and why there's a level of havoc of unresolved trauma that has sculpted the foundation of their substance abuse addiction especially if they have struggled with complex trauma. Conclusion & Significance: The participants in this study were very open to understanding the traumatic causes of their substance abuse. This understanding is a prerequisite for developing appropriate treatment and improving humanistic approaches to engage patients, families, and communities as providers become more aware and educated on the complex traumas the patient experiences simultaneously as a child. Exploring the 10 ACEs of trauma are physical abuse, Sexual abuse, Emotional abuse, Physical neglect, Emotional neglect, Mental illness, Divorce, Substance abuse, Violence against your mother, Mental illness, and Having a relative who has been sent to jail or prison. And they increase the risk of physical, emotional, and social problems later in life.

Image





Biography

Cristina Collazo is the President / CEO of Esther House Inc. an organization specializing in helping families that struggle with homelessness and substance challenges. While working as a bilingual substance abuse counselor who works with people recovering from alcohol and substance abuse outpatient treatment at Innovative Health Systems, Inc. Cristina has an extensive background in the human and social service population and is passionate about serving others and helping people from all walks of life. Her bi-lingual and bi-cultural background, and focus on community collaboration, have led her to leadership responsibilities within her immediate community where she has recognized the need for coordinated, person-centered care for Medicaid recipients with multiple chronic medical conditions Cristina is pursuing a BA in Psychology with an emphasis on trauma from Grand Canyon University. Cristina was on the Deans' List from 2020-2021.

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