How many recover from alcohol and drug abuse annually?

Dear Alice,

Do you know how many people recover from alcohol and drug abuse annually? I would really like to know.

Thanks,
Stat-man

Answer

Dear Stat-man,

First, a couple of definitions and distinctions: "abuse" according to the American Psychiatric Association describes a pattern of use that causes impairment of social or occupational functioning. Compare that to "dependence," characterized by either tolerance (a need for increasing amounts of a drug, over time, to achieve the same effect) or withdrawal symptoms. "Addiction" is defined by compulsive use, a need to increase dosage over time, and symptoms of tolerance and withdrawal. Dependence and/or addiction may also be associated with continuing the drug abuse behavior despite suffering negative consequences.

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [2], 40 percent of those who entered a treatment facility in 2004 (numbering a little over one million individuals) successfully completed treatment (FYI ? this does not necessarily mean that these individuals fully recovered from drug/alcohol dependency, rather that they completed a treatment plan). According to the American Psychiatric Association [3], the highest rate of treatment completion is in a hospital residential center while the lowest rates of completion are typically found in less-structured modes of treatment. Those who are most likely to complete treatment are over age 40, have twelve or more years of education, and use alcohol instead of drugs.

An individual's motivations to seek and follow-through with treatment for drug abuse play a major role in the degree of recovery. Some individuals treat themselves, ceasing substance use because of a family crisis or health problem that they tie directly to their substance use. Others find professional help from psychotherapists, treatment centers, and support groups. The level of social support from relatives, friends, and colleagues may influence an individual's recovery as well. Even with strong motivation, psychological and physical substance dependence, as well as environmental factors like social pressures to use, are
powerful forces that may work against recovery. Socio-cultural factors may also influence substance use, abuse, the desire to seek treatment, and recovery rates.

If you or someone you know at Columbia has a problem with alcohol or drugs, appointments are available with Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) at x4-2878 to talk with a substance use expert. Individuals who are not affiliated with Columbia can contact Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) or Narcotics Anonymous (NA) for referrals to drug treatment. If you are interested in recent research findings regarding success rates of specific treatment methods, you may want to visit the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc., which provides statistical information and resources related to drug abuse recovery.

Though this response may generate more questions that go beyond the statistics, here’s hoping that it’s still helpful,

Alice!
Category: Miscellaneous

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