Dear Substance Use Specialists,

During the most recent SUS Clinical Care Call a number of comments were made related to the use of psychotropic medications by people that are actively using substances. We asked Dr. Leslie Marino, an addictions psychiatrist and Assistant Professor at Columbia University, and Dr. David Lowenthal, CPI Medical Director, for their thoughts on the matter.

In sum, both suggest that the stopping of medications may do more harm than good and should not be done in a knee-jerk way. However, both also identify that each individual case is different depending on what medications the person is prescribed, what substances they are using, and other factors. For example, Dr. Lowenthal noted that, “I am not sure I want someone who is very high most of the time on methamphetamine continuing to take his lithium because of the danger of toxicity – he may experience fluid shifts from dehydration and/or take too many pills, etc.” Dr. Marino expressed concern about people taking benzodiazepines with either opioids or alcohol due to overdose risk and suggested they be closely monitored. She also mentioned that some medications, like antidepressants, are “probably less effective in the context of substance use,” but she still recommends her patients take them. Dr. Lowenthal made a similar point, noting, “I also think in many instances the medications simply do not work as desired in people who are using heavily, and, in those cases, the side effects and risks of the medications may outweigh the benefits, depending on the medication.”

In general, we would also advise providers to discuss their concerns and questions with the prescribing clinicians on their team.

Two additional resources with information about this, although a few years old are TIP 42: Substance Abuse Treatment for Persons with Co-Occurring Disorders, which is free, and Integrated Treatment for Dual Disorders – A Guide to Effective Practice by Mueser et al. FIT Module 27: Understanding the Use of Medications for Clients with COD in the LMS may also be helpful.

This is an important topic and one we should be knowledgeable about to provide ACT participants with accurate information.

Please join us for the next ACT Substance Use Specialist Clinical Care Call on Tuesday, September 27, 2019 from 3:00 - 4:00PM.

Thank you for taking part in the conversation!

ACT Institute
Dear Substance Use Specialists,

Thank you for joining us for this past week’s clinical care call. We had a great case presentation by Troy Wennet from The Bridge.

During the call, people asked many questions and provided myriad ideas for working with the person Troy presented, the focus being mainly on how to help him increase his motivation for addressing his substance use. Over the course of the call a number of resources were mentioned, including the values card sort, decisional balance and WRAP plan.

For more information on WRAP, check out https://mentalhealthrecovery.com/. Another great resource, particularly for running dual recovery groups, is the WSM+ manual available through the LMS (https://practiceinnovations.org/Products/wsm-plus-workbooks-new-york).

Also, if you joined us for the call on 4/30, please complete a brief survey to let us know your thoughts (https://cumc.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5BwjtwEDXmMIDHy5).

Thank you so much!

ACT Institute