Introduction to Alcoholics Anonymous and Other Twelve Step Programs

Sarah Bagley MD
Addiction Medicine Fellow
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Objectives

- Review the background of AA
- Describe the therapeutic elements to promote recovery
- Briefly review the literature
- Know the guidelines for referring a patient
- Feel comfortable about attending a meeting
Background

- 1935: Bill W. and Dr. Bob meet
- 1939: “Big Book” published
- 2 million members in 182 countries
- Expanded to NA, CA and family support groups
- No group/individual in charge
Background

- Only requirement is desire to stop drinking
- Spiritual, not religious
- Types of meetings: closed v open
Promoting Recovery

- 12 steps
- Sponsorship (self and others)
- Sober environment of meetings
- Forum for telling story with NO judgment
- Anniversaries
- Slogans
- Socializing outside of meetings
Research has shown that:

1. AA attendance is associated with reduced health care costs
2. Longer and more intensive AA involvement is associated with better outcomes
3. Professional addiction treatment plus AA is superior to professional addiction treatment alone
4. All of the above
Does it work?

YES!!

• But... dependent on participants involvement*
• Three mechanisms: self efficacy, increases coping skills and facilitates adaptive changes in social networks**
• Professionals can impact level of affiliation***


I have referred a patient to Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous.

1. Never
2. Once
3. 2-5 times
4. >5 times
My primary concern about referring patients to Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous is:

1. I don’t know much about the programs
2. The programs are too religious
3. The programs emphasize that members are powerless
4. I am not concerned about referring patients
Referring a patient

- Put in touch with member
- Get list of local meetings
- Discuss with patient where they would feel comfortable going
- Encourage going with someone else
- Bring up possible conflicting messages
Possible Conflicts

- Recruitment
- Religion
- Medications
- Powerlessness
I have attended an Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous meeting in the past.

1. Never
2. Once
3. >2 times
Attending a meeting

- Attend only open meetings
- Be honest and direct about who you are
- Respect confidentiality
- No notes
- Feel free to join in the prayer, give a few dollars if you want
References

- Amodeo M and Lopez L. Making Effective Referrals to Alcoholics Anonymous and Other 12-step programs. In Satiz R. (Editor) *Addressing Unhealthy Alcohol Use in Primary Care.* pp 73-84Springer Publishing Company