

Drug and Alcohol Nursing - Hang Wai Lai

Addiction, whether it is of alcohol, substance, gambling or otherwise have been extensively studied and its pathological states have been shown to have various impacts on each domain of health of an individual with addiction. As individuals constitutes the communities which are the foundation and building blocks of societies. The impacts of addiction have on individuals would there impacts on their communities and the societies which they are build upon. Addictions are often viewed as a lifestyle choice rather than a condition or an illness, where it is the individual's personal choice or free will to abuse substance. As a result, the individuals with addiction being seen as responsible for their own actions and are indistinguishably being labelled with stereotypes and stigmatised against by their communities and society. Implementation of social policy and legislation that targets criminalisation of drug user for possession does not only further encourage the social stereotype and stigmatisation that disempower individuals and discourage them from seeking help. While it is a commonly societal perception that individuals with addictions are pathological to the society, they failed to perceive and understand the social policy, legislation and societal response to individuals with AOD issues determines the level of impacts addiction have on the individuals. Current social policy and legislations indiscriminately targets and incarcerate individual with a drug offense. Illicit drug use is common within a prison system, and it is a well-known fact that individual who are imprisoned often are released back into the community with a even more complex profile of substance use. Thus, the current social policy and legislation are potential worsening AOD issues faced by society.

The success of Portugal in curbing impacts of AOD issues by decriminalisation of individual drug use have demonstrated that social policy and legislation play an important role in curbing the impacts of addiction and AODs issues. In Australia, implementation of the harm minimisation philosophy in Drug and Alcohol Nursing Practice have demonstrated that how society respond to and treat individual with addiction issues have a positive impact on their health, which in turn benefits communities and the society as a whole. As Drug and Alcohol Nurses, we are the frontier in improving the health of society by helping individuals with AOD addictions using a harm minimisation approach. Using a non-judgemental approach to collaborate with client and empower them to manage their substance use have not only improved their quality of life and domains of health. The opioid treatment program has reduced the demands for illicit opiates, number of opiates overdoses and related death. The partnership and collaboration with consumer have also provided the valuable opportunity for research and study to understand the nature of addiction. This lead to a more in-depth understanding of how adverse childhood experience, trauma, domestic violence and mental conditions could lead to

substance abuse and addiction. These research data allow Drug and Alcohol Nurse in Australia to develop preventive and management strategy to curb the impacts of societal AOD issues.