Is Your Nursing Colleague Impaired?
Part One: Impact and Indicators

Drug Abuse Indicators
- Errors in documentation & patient care
- Illegible handwriting
- Failure to do a narcotic count
- Uses the maximum PRN dosage when other nurses use less
- Work habits deteriorate
- Prefers units with high narcotic use
- RARELY absent—needs access to drugs
- Frequently takes bathroom breaks
- Pinpoint pupils, runny nose, watery eyes, diaphoresis, etc.
- May be sleepy or hyper while working
- Offers to help distribute meds to other nurses’ patients
- Patients complain of no pain relief
- Prefers PMs and night shifts

Alcohol Abuse Indicators
- Alcohol odor on breath
- Tremors of the hands
- Emotional instability/mood swings
- Lapses in memory or confusion
- Sleepiness or dozing off at work
- Increased tardiness & absenteeism
- Complains of personal/financial problems
- Work habits deteriorate
- May withdraw from colleagues
- May have transportation issues if convicted of DWI (driving while impaired)
- Erratic job history; multiple employers
- Slowed, thick speech
- Errors of judgment
- Excessive use of mouthwash/mints

Impacts of chemical dependency on Nurse

Health
- Diabetes
- Hypertension
- Cardiovascular disease
- Traumatic injuries
- Liver and other diseases
- Death from overdose, suicide or injuries

Personal Life
- Low self esteem
- Increased risk for anxiety and depression
- Family and other relationships suffer
- Financial problems
- Legal issues

Professional Practice
- Increased risk of harming patient(s)
- May lose respect & trust of colleagues
- Loss of self respect
- May be fired, suspended and/or placed on probation.
- Loss of income and seniority
- May lose license.
- Will be monitored if allowed to return to practice

References


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