Drug and alcohol abuse, already a widespread problem, is rapidly escalating. Substance abuse is a psychosocial and a biologic problem. Television and radio advertisements entice viewers with the hope of relief from pain and problems; they demonstrate that a life without stress is possible. The values portrayed are clear: Discomfort should be erased; drinking is vital to a stress-free life; drugs are acceptable mediators of emotions.

Substance abuse is a complex public health issue with grave ramifications. It increases the crime rate, auto accident deaths, number of teenage pregnancies, and the suicide rate. Individuals and families are destroyed. Every part of a substance abuser’s life—social life, family life, work productivity and relationships, physical health—is affected. Substance abuse in the work environment increases accidents, workers’ compensation claims, absenteeism, and theft while decreasing the quality of life for other workers and potentially decreasing the quality of the work performed overall.

This chapter is a biopsychosocial exploration, applying the nursing process to clients who have substance-related disorders. Be aware of the need to keep up-to-date on the trends, fads, and activities related to substance abuse, because they change quickly. The importance of having a knowledge base on this topic, developing caring attitudes, and developing skilled therapeutic interventions are discussed in the standards of addiction nursing, jointly written by the American Nurses Association and the International Nurses Society on Addictions. This data can be found on http://nursesbooks.org, the website of the publishing arm of the American Nurses Association.

**SUBSTANCE-RELATED DISORDERS**

According to the DSM-IV-TR (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2000), substance-related disorders are disorders that are: (1) a consequence of abusing a drug (such as alcohol), (2) the side effects of a medication (such as antihistamines), or (3) related to exposure to a toxin (fuel, paint, or other inhalants). Substance-related disorders are divided into two groups:

1. Substance use disorders that include substance dependence and substance abuse
2. Substance-induced disorders (including substance intoxication and substance withdrawal as well as other substance-induced disorders such as substance-induced cognitive disorders, mood disorders, and the like)

This chapter focuses on substance dependence and substance abuse, including the intoxication and withdrawal issues for those classes of substances that have traditionally been called psychoactive drugs. The DSM-IV-TR diagnostic criteria for substance abuse and substance dependence are listed in the diagnostic criteria feature.

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### DSM-IV-TR Diagnostic Criteria for Substance Abuse vs. Substance Dependence

#### Diagnostic Criteria for Substance Abuse

A. A maladaptive pattern of substance use leading to clinically significant impairment or distress, as manifested by one (or more) of the following, occurring within a 12-month period:

1. recurrent substance use resulting in a failure to fulfill major role obligations at work, school, or home
2. recurrent substance use in situations in which it is physically hazardous
3. recurrent substance-related legal problems
4. continued substance use despite having persistent or recurrent social or interpersonal problems caused or exacerbated by the effects of the substance

B. The symptoms have never met the criteria for substance dependence for this class of substance.

#### Diagnostic Criteria for Substance Dependence

A maladaptive pattern of substance use, leading to clinically significant impairment or distress, as manifested by three (or more) of the following, occurring at any time in the same 12-month period:

1. tolerance
2. withdrawal
3. the substance is often taken in larger amounts or over a longer period than was intended
4. there is a persistent desire or unsuccessful efforts to cut down or control substance use
5. a great deal of time is spent in activities necessary to obtain the substance
6. important social, occupational, or recreational activities are given up or reduced
7. the substance use is continued despite knowledge of having a persistent or recurrent physical or psychological problem that is likely to have been caused or exacerbated by the substance