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Understanding and Addressing Substance Use: A Comprehensive Guide for Healthcare Professionals

1. A nurse is comparing two patients: one consumed three beers at a single party without impairing function, the other repeatedly loses jobs, relationships, and legal standing due to drinking. Which feature best distinguishes substance use disorder from substance misuse?

- A. Use in a quantity or frequency that risks harm to self or others
- B. Temporary overuse during a special occasion
- C. Repeated use despite occupational, social, familial, or legal consequences
- D. Use to cope with stress or negative emotions

2. Which phrasing in a patient record reflects person-centered, non-stigmatizing language?

- A. Chronic alcoholic
- B. Drug junkie
- C. Person with an alcohol use disorder
- D. Clean patient

3. Impairment of which brain region most directly reduces executive control and decision making in addiction?

- A. Nucleus accumbens
- B. Basal ganglia
- C. Prefrontal cortex
- D. Extended amygdala

4. According to DSM-5 criteria, how many symptoms must an individual exhibit to be diagnosed with severe substance use disorder?

- A. Six or more symptoms
- B. Four to five symptoms
- C. Two to three symptoms
- D. One symptom

5. Which scenario describes a protective factor against developing a substance use disorder?

- A. Adolescent with a consistent optimistic outlook
- B. Teen who begins substance use in a high-stress environment
- C. Adult with early exposure to peer substance use

D. Child with delayed prefrontal cortex maturation

6. Which evidence-based treatment modality provides tangible rewards for abstinence milestones?

- A. Cognitive behavioral therapy
- B. Dialectical behavior therapy
- C. Motivational interviewing
- D. Contingency management

7. A nurse plans an intervention that empowers patients through accurate information and decision-making. Which action fits this goal?

- A. Monitoring vital signs hourly
- B. Providing tailored psychoeducation about the disorder
- C. Imposing a strict abstinence contract
- D. Conducting unstructured peer discussions

8. Which screening tool is a 10-item self-administered questionnaire with items scored 0–4 for identifying risky alcohol use?

- A. AUDIT
- B. CAGE
- C. DAST
- D. ASSIST

9. Spending several hours each day obtaining cocaine and neglecting family is an example of which DSM-5 substance use category?

- A. Risky use
- B. Impaired control
- C. Physical dependence
- D. Social problems

10. Ketamine is classified pharmacologically as which type of hallucinogen?

- A. Psychedelic
- B. Stimulant
- C. Depressant
- D. Dissociative drug

11. Which scenario illustrates the DSM-5 criterion of 'continued use despite interpersonal problems' (social problems)?

- A. Continuing substance use even when family arguments worsen

- B. Using a substance in physically dangerous situations
- C. Needing higher doses for the same effect
- D. Experiencing withdrawal when not using

12. Which genetic variation is most likely to reduce risk for alcohol use disorder by causing adverse reactions to alcohol?

- A. Dopamine transporter gene variant
- B. GABA receptor polymorphism
- C. ALDH2 gene variant that slows metabolism causing flushing
- D. Prefrontal cortex development gene variant

13. Which phrase is most appropriate when documenting a newborn experiencing withdrawal from maternal opioid use?

- A. Newborn with neonatal opioid withdrawal syndrome
- B. Addicted baby
- C. Drug-exposed infant
- D. Junky neonate

14. Which term is outdated and likely to perpetuate stigma when referring to substance use disorder?

- A. Substance use disorder
- B. Person with an SUD
- C. Drug misuse
- D. Junkie

15. Which harm reduction strategy helps prevent transmission of bloodborne infections among people who inject drugs?

- A. Mandating abstinence programs
- B. Providing sterile needle exchange services
- C. Restricting access to syringes
- D. Removing injection equipment from circulation

16. Which medication is an opioid antagonist approved to treat both alcohol use disorder and opioid use disorder?

- A. Methadone
- B. Disulfiram
- C. Naltrexone
- D. Topiramate

17. Which patient would be most appropriately referred to an intensive outpatient program (IOP)?

- A. Severe use disorder with unstable housing
- B. Mild misuse with strong social support
- C. Moderate use disorder needing structured daily sessions at home
- D. End-stage organ failure requiring acute care

18. A brief intervention in a primary care clinic begins with personalized feedback and goal setting. This approach exemplifies which technique?

- A. Didactic lecture on addiction biology
- B. Confrontational advice to quit
- C. Nonjudgmental feedback and collaborative planning
- D. Immediate referral without discussion

19. Which is NOT considered a biological risk factor for substance use disorder?

- A. Family history of addiction
- B. Male sex assigned at birth
- C. Co-occurring ADHD
- D. Low socioeconomic status

20. Which example best illustrates a protective biological factor against alcohol use disorder?

- A. Early prefrontal cortex development
- B. High peer resistance skills
- C. Low neighborhood stress
- D. ALDH2 variant causing flushing after alcohol

21. What is the primary goal of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) in treating substance use disorders?

- A. Eliminate all cravings immediately
- B. Address family dynamics only
- C. Identify and alter unhelpful thought and behavior patterns related to use
- D. Provide group support exclusively

22. A patient expresses interest in joining Alcoholics Anonymous. Which referral option aligns best with a 12-step program?

- A. Peer-led fellowship meetings at a community center
- B. Individual CBT sessions at the clinic
- C. Voucher-based contingency management
- D. Digital self-help app

23. The extended amygdala in addiction neuroscience is primarily associated with which process?

- A. Habit formation
- B. Reward sensitivity
- C. Executive decision making
- D. Stress and negative affect during withdrawal

24. Which advantage of digital technologies helps deliver substance use interventions at the moment of greatest vulnerability?

- A. Replacing all in-person therapy
- B. Standardizing pharmacotherapy regimens
- C. Reducing the need for professional training
- D. Using mobile sensors and machine learning to prompt tailored support

25. How many DSM-5 criteria define a mild substance use disorder?

- A. Two to three criteria
- B. Four to five criteria
- C. Six or more criteria
- D. One criterion

26. Which statement best describes the relationship between substance use disorders and co-occurring psychiatric disorders?

- A. Presence of another mental health disorder almost doubles addiction risk
- B. Co-occurrence rarely affects treatment outcomes
- C. Substance use always precedes other psychiatric diagnoses
- D. They are unrelated conditions

27. What is a key benefit of office-based buprenorphine maintenance therapy for opioid use disorder?

- A. Reduces cravings and withdrawal without producing euphoria
- B. Requires daily inpatient administration
- C. Causes high levels of sedation
- D. Leads to rapid discontinuation

28. Which statement correctly contrasts LSD and mescaline regarding potency?

- A. Mescaline is active at microgram doses, LSD requires milligrams
- B. LSD's effects last days, mescaline's last hours
- C. LSD is potent at microgram doses whereas mescaline requires hundreds of milligrams
- D. Mescaline's potency is higher so lower doses suffice

29. Which substance is classified as a volatile alkyl nitrite inhalant?

- A. Paint thinner
- B. Amyl nitrite (poppers)
- C. Gasoline
- D. Nitrous oxide

30. Which symptom is characteristic of tobacco withdrawal?

- A. Seizures and hallucinations
- B. Severe hypotension
- C. Irritability and increased appetite
- D. Bradycardia and hypothermia

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