

# **SUBSTANCE DEPENDENCE AND CO-OCCURRING PSYCHIATRIC DISORDERS**

**Best Practices for Diagnosis and  
Clinical Treatment**

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**Edited by  
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*To our mentor, Frederic M. Quitkin, M.D.*

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# Table of Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i> . . . . .	xxxi
<i>Introduction and Overview</i> . . . . .	xxxiii
<i>About the Editors and Authors</i> . . . . .	xliii
<b>PART 1: MOOD DISORDERS</b> . . . . .	P1-1
<b>Chapter 1: Depression in Patients With Substance Use Disorders</b> <i>Edward V. Nunes, M.D., Grace Hennessy, M.D., and Jeffrey Selzer, M.D.</i>	
Introduction . . . . .	1-2
Case Presentation . . . . .	1-4
Chief Complaint . . . . .	1-4
Patient History . . . . .	1-4
Alcohol and Other Drug History . . . . .	1-4
Psychiatric History . . . . .	1-4
Developmental History . . . . .	1-5
Treatment History . . . . .	1-5
Family History . . . . .	1-5
Medical History . . . . .	1-5
Social History . . . . .	1-5
Mental Status Examination . . . . .	1-5
Diagnostic Criteria and Technique . . . . .	1-6
<i>DSM-IV</i> Criteria for Depressive Disorders . . . . .	1-6
How to Take a History . . . . .	1-15
Outline Substance Abuse History . . . . .	1-15
Look for Depressive Syndromes . . . . .	1-15
Determine Whether Depression Should Be Classified as Primary (Independent) or Substance-Induced . . . . .	1-15
Determine Whether Depression Should Be Classified as Unipolar or Bipolar . . . . .	1-16
Ask About Past Treatments for Depression . . . . .	1-17
Examine Family History . . . . .	1-17
Ask About Suicide and Potential for Violence . . . . .	1-17
Ask About Psychosis . . . . .	1-18
Ask About Other Psychiatric Disorders . . . . .	1-18
Take a Brief Developmental or Childhood History . . . . .	1-18
Ask About Trauma and Abuse . . . . .	1-18
Natural History and Etiology . . . . .	1-19
Risk Factors and Possible Causative Mechanisms . . . . .	1-19
Course of Depression in Relation to Course of Substance Use Over the Lifetime . . . . .	1-20

Issues in Diagnosis: Challenge of Distinguishing Primary Depression From  
 Substance-Induced Depression From Expected Effects of Substances . . . . . 1-21

Instruments and Methods for Screening and Diagnosis . . . . . 1-22

    Screening Instruments . . . . . 1-22

    Diagnostic Instruments . . . . . 1-22

Differential Diagnosis and Other Overlapping Disorders . . . . . 1-24

Treatment Options . . . . . 1-27

    Treatments for Depression . . . . . 1-27

        Cognitive Behavioral Therapy . . . . . 1-27

        Interpersonal Psychotherapy . . . . . 1-27

        Antidepressant Medications . . . . . 1-27

        Choice of Treatment for Depression . . . . . 1-28

    Treatment of Substance Use Disorder . . . . . 1-28

    Treatment of Depression in Substance-Dependent Patients:

        What Is the Evidence? . . . . . 1-29

        What if the Patient Cannot Become Abstinent? . . . . . 1-29

        Organization of Services . . . . . 1-31

        Treatment Planning for the Case Example . . . . . 1-32

Summary . . . . . 1-32

Suggestions for Further Reading . . . . . 1-33

Authors' Note . . . . . 1-34

References . . . . . 1-34

**Chapter 2: Bipolar Disorder in Patients With Substance Use Disorders**

*Timothy G. Benson, M.D., Rachel E. Bender, M.A., Patrice M. Muchowski, Sc.D., and Roger D. Weiss, M.D.*

Introduction . . . . . 2-2

Case Presentation . . . . . 2-3

    Chief Complaint . . . . . 2-3

    Patient History . . . . . 2-3

        Substance Use History . . . . . 2-3

        Psychiatric History . . . . . 2-3

        Developmental History . . . . . 2-3

        Family History . . . . . 2-4

        Medical History . . . . . 2-4

        Social History . . . . . 2-4

    Mental Status Examination . . . . . 2-4

Diagnostic Criteria . . . . . 2-4

    DSM-IV Criteria for Bipolar Disorders . . . . . 2-4

    How to Take a History . . . . . 2-13

        Review Substance Use History . . . . . 2-13

        Inquire About History of Depressive Symptoms . . . . . 2-13

        Identify Mania and Hypomania . . . . . 2-13

Ask About Prior Pharmacological Treatments . . . . .	2-14
Examine Family History . . . . .	2-14
Natural History and Etiology . . . . .	2-14
Onset and Diagnosis of Bipolar Disorder . . . . .	2-14
Course of Bipolar Disorder . . . . .	2-15
Issues in Diagnosis: Making the Diagnosis of Bipolar Disorder in	
Substance-Dependent Patients . . . . .	2-15
Instruments and Methods for Screening and Diagnosis . . . . .	2-16
Differential Diagnosis and Other Overlapping Disorders . . . . .	2-17
Treatment Options . . . . .	2-18
Pharmacological Treatment for Bipolar Disorder . . . . .	2-18
Psychosocial Treatment for Bipolar Disorder . . . . .	2-19
Rationale for Psychosocial Treatments for Bipolar Disorder . . . . .	2-19
Timing of Treatment . . . . .	2-19
Types of Treatment . . . . .	2-19
Cognitive Behavioral Therapy . . . . .	2-20
Psychoeducation . . . . .	2-20
Interpersonal Social Rhythm Therapy . . . . .	2-20
Family-Focused Therapy . . . . .	2-21
Summary of Psychosocial Treatments for Bipolar Disorder . . . . .	2-21
Psychosocial Treatments for Co-Occurring Bipolar	
Disorder and Substance Use Disorders . . . . .	2-21
Need for Specific Treatment for Bipolar Disorder and	
Substance Use Disorder . . . . .	2-21
Description of Integrated Group Therapy . . . . .	2-22
Features That Make Integrated Group Therapy “Integrated” . . . . .	2-22
Common Themes in Treatment of Patients With Bipolar	
Disorder and Substance Use Disorders . . . . .	2-22
Organization of Services . . . . .	2-23
Treatment Planning for the Case Example . . . . .	2-25
Summary . . . . .	2-25
Suggestions for Further Reading . . . . .	2-26
Authors’ Note . . . . .	2-27
References . . . . .	2-27

**PART 2: ANXIETY DISORDERS . . . . . P2-1**

**Chapter 3: Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in Patients With Substance Use Disorders**

*Kathleen Brady, M.D., Ph.D., Denise Hien, Ph.D., Louise Haynes, M.S.W., and Therese Killeen, Ph.D., A.P.R.N., B.C.*

Introduction . . . . .	3-2
Case Presentations . . . . .	3-3
Case 1 . . . . .	3-3
Case 2 . . . . .	3-3

Diagnostic Criteria . . . . .	3-4
<i>DSM-IV-TR</i> Criteria for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder . . . . .	3-4
Mood Disorders, Acute Stress Disorder, and Disorders of Extreme Stress Not Otherwise Specified . . . . .	3-4
Acute Stress Disorder . . . . .	3-9
Disorders of Extreme Stress Not Otherwise Specified . . . . .	3-9
Using History of Trauma to Distinguish Mood Symptoms From Effects of Substances . . . . .	3-9
Natural History and Etiology . . . . .	3-9
Issues in Diagnosis: Making a Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Diagnosis in Substance-Dependent Patients . . . . .	3-14
Instruments and Methods for Screening and Diagnosis . . . . .	3-15
Differential Diagnosis and Other Overlapping Disorders . . . . .	3-16
Depression and Suicide Risk . . . . .	3-16
Other Anxiety Disorders . . . . .	3-16
Personality Disorders and Eating Disorders . . . . .	3-16
Treatment Options . . . . .	3-19
Psychosocial Treatments . . . . .	3-19
Psychoeducational and Cognitive Behavioral Techniques . . . . .	3-19
Exposure-Based Methods . . . . .	3-19
Timing, Intensity, and Type of Psychosocial Treatment . . . . .	3-19
Summary of Empirically Supported Findings . . . . .	3-20
Other Widely Used Psychosocial Treatments . . . . .	3-20
Medication Treatment . . . . .	3-22
Organization of Services: Treating Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in Community Substance Abuse Treatment Settings . . . . .	3-22
Slow Adoption of New Treatment Practices . . . . .	3-23
Selection and Adoption of Treatment Models . . . . .	3-23
Role of Supervisors . . . . .	3-24
Barriers to Using Medication . . . . .	3-24
Conclusions . . . . .	3-25
Treatment Planning for the Case Examples . . . . .	3-25
Case 1 . . . . .	3-25
Case 2 . . . . .	3-25
Lessons Learned From Case Examples . . . . .	3-26
Summary . . . . .	3-26
Suggestions for Further Reading . . . . .	3-26
References . . . . .	3-27



**Chapter 4: Other Anxiety Disorders in Patients With Substance Use Disorders: Panic Disorder, Agoraphobia, Social Anxiety Disorder, and Generalized Anxiety Disorder**

*Carlos Blanco, M.D., Ph.D., Carrie A. Davies, B.S., and Edward V. Nunes, M.D.*

Introduction . . . . .	4-2
Panic Disorder and Agoraphobia . . . . .	4-2
Social Anxiety Disorder . . . . .	4-3
Generalized Anxiety Disorder . . . . .	4-9
Substance-Induced Anxiety Disorder . . . . .	4-9
Identifying Specific Mood or Anxiety Disorders in the Presence of Depression, Anxiety, Irritability, or Impaired Function . . . . .	4-10
Case Presentations . . . . .	4-19
Case 1 . . . . .	4-19
History of Drug Problems . . . . .	4-19
History of Mood and Anxiety Problems . . . . .	4-19
Developmental History . . . . .	4-20
Medical History . . . . .	4-20
Diagnostic Formulation . . . . .	4-20
Case 2 . . . . .	4-21
History of Mood and Anxiety Problems . . . . .	4-21
Developmental History . . . . .	4-22
Diagnostic Formulation . . . . .	4-22
Case 3 . . . . .	4-22
History of Drug and Alcohol Problems . . . . .	4-22
History of Mood and Anxiety Problems . . . . .	4-23
Course During Inpatient Detoxification . . . . .	4-23
Diagnostic Formulation . . . . .	4-23
Diagnostic Criteria . . . . .	4-24
<i>DSM-IV</i> Criteria for Panic Attack, Agoraphobia, and Panic Disorder . . . . .	4-24
<i>DSM-IV</i> Criteria for Social Anxiety Disorder . . . . .	4-24
<i>DSM-IV</i> Criteria for Generalized Anxiety Disorder . . . . .	4-25
Natural History and Etiology . . . . .	4-25
Genetics and Stress . . . . .	4-25
Relationship of Anxiety Disorders to Substance Use Disorders . . . . .	4-25
Issues in Diagnosis: Diagnosing Anxiety Disorders in Substance-Dependent Patients . . . . .	4-26
Instruments and Methods for Screening and Diagnosis . . . . .	4-27
Differential Diagnosis and Comorbid Psychiatric Disorders . . . . .	4-28

Co-Occurring Psychiatric Disorders . . . . .	4-28
Medical Conditions . . . . .	4-28
Treatment Options . . . . .	4-28
Caution in Prescribing Benzodiazepines . . . . .	4-29
Panic Disorder With or Without Agoraphobia . . . . .	4-30
Social Anxiety Disorder . . . . .	4-31
Generalized Anxiety Disorder . . . . .	4-32
Summary . . . . .	4-32
Suggestions for Further Reading . . . . .	4-33
Authors' Note . . . . .	4-33
References . . . . .	4-33

**PART 3: DISORDERS OF ATTENTION AND COGNITIVE  
FUNCTIONING AND CHRONIC MENTAL ILLNESS . . . . . P3-1**

**Chapter 5: Adult Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in Patients With  
Substance Use Disorders**

*John J. Mariani, M.D., and Frances R. Levin, M.D.*

Introduction . . . . .	5-2
Case Presentation . . . . .	5-3
Identifying Data . . . . .	5-3
Chief Complaint . . . . .	5-3
Patient History . . . . .	5-3
History of Present Illness . . . . .	5-3
Substance Use History . . . . .	5-4
Psychiatric History . . . . .	5-4
Developmental History . . . . .	5-4
Family History . . . . .	5-4
Medical History . . . . .	5-4
Social History . . . . .	5-4
Mental Status Examination . . . . .	5-4
Diagnostic Criteria . . . . .	5-5
Clinical Diagnosis . . . . .	5-5
Potential for Under- or Overdiagnosis . . . . .	5-8
Application to Case Example . . . . .	5-8
Natural History and Etiology . . . . .	5-8
Issues Involved in Making the Diagnosis in Substance-Dependent Patients . . . . .	5-10
Methods for Screening and Diagnosis . . . . .	5-10
Differential Diagnosis and Overlapping Disorders . . . . .	5-11
Treatment Options . . . . .	5-11
Importance of Treating ADHD . . . . .	5-11
Treatment of ADHD With Stimulant Medications . . . . .	5-12
Treatment of ADHD With Nonstimulant Medications . . . . .	5-12

Studies of Medications for ADHD . . . . .	5-13
Psychosocial Treatments . . . . .	5-13
Limitations of Treatment for ADHD . . . . .	5-13
Summary . . . . .	5-14
Suggestions for Further Reading . . . . .	5-14
References . . . . .	5-14

**Chapter 6: Delirium, Dementia, and Other Cognitive Disorders in Patients With Substance Use Disorders**

*Petros Levounis, M.D., M.A., and Efrat Aharonovich, Ph.D.*

Introduction . . . . .	6-2
Case Presentations . . . . .	6-4
Case 1: Delirium and Dementia . . . . .	6-4
Chief Complaint and History of Present Illness . . . . .	6-4
Patient History . . . . .	6-4
Alcohol and Other Drug History . . . . .	6-4
Psychiatric and Treatment History . . . . .	6-4
Developmental History . . . . .	6-4
Family History . . . . .	6-5
Medical History . . . . .	6-5
Mental Status Examination . . . . .	6-5
Physical Examination . . . . .	6-5
Medical Workup . . . . .	6-5
Follow-Up . . . . .	6-6
Diagnosis . . . . .	6-6
Clinical Summary . . . . .	6-6
Case 2: Cognitive Impairments . . . . .	6-7
Chief Complaint and History of Present Illness . . . . .	6-7
Patient History . . . . .	6-7
Alcohol and Other Drug History . . . . .	6-7
Psychiatric and Treatment History . . . . .	6-7
Developmental History . . . . .	6-7
Family History . . . . .	6-7
Medical History . . . . .	6-7
Mental Status Examination . . . . .	6-7
Treatment Attendance/Participation . . . . .	6-8
Clinical Summary . . . . .	6-8
Diagnostic Criteria . . . . .	6-8
Delirium . . . . .	6-8
Common Causes of Delirium in Substance-Dependent Patients . . . . .	6-11
Substance Intoxication . . . . .	6-11

Head Trauma . . . . .	6-12
Wernicke’s Encephalopathy and Korsakoff’s Dementia . . . . .	6-12
Substance Withdrawal . . . . .	6-12
Acute Infections . . . . .	6-13
Distinguishing Delirium From Psychosis . . . . .	6-13
Dementia . . . . .	6-13
Cognitive Impairments Not Otherwise Specified . . . . .	6-15
Principal Domains of Cognitive Function: Attention, Memory, and Executive Functions . . . . .	6-15
Attention . . . . .	6-16
Memory . . . . .	6-16
Executive Functions (Abstraction) . . . . .	6-16
Neuropsychological Assessment . . . . .	6-17
Natural History and Etiology of Neuropsychological Impairment in Substance-Dependent Patients . . . . .	6-17
Alcohol . . . . .	6-18
Cocaine . . . . .	6-18
Amphetamines . . . . .	6-19
Cannabis . . . . .	6-19
Other Drugs and Polysubstance Dependence . . . . .	6-19
Issues Involved in Making a Diagnosis in Substance-Dependent Patients . . . . .	6-20
Instruments and Methods for Screening and Diagnosis . . . . .	6-20
Treatment Options . . . . .	6-21
Delirium and Dementia . . . . .	6-21
Cognitive Impairments Not Otherwise Specified . . . . .	6-21
Counseling Techniques . . . . .	6-22
Compensation for Deficits in Attention During Counseling . . . . .	6-22
Compensation for Deficits in Memory During Counseling . . . . .	6-23
Compensation for Deficits in Executive Functioning During Counseling . . . . .	6-23
Summary . . . . .	6-24
Suggestions for Further Reading . . . . .	6-24
References . . . . .	6-25

**Chapter 7: Schizophrenia and Schizoaffective Illness in Patients  
With Substance Use Disorders**

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Introduction . . . . .	7-3
Case Presentation . . . . .	7-4
Chief Complaint . . . . .	7-5
Patient History . . . . .	7-5
Alcohol and Other Drug History . . . . .	7-5

Psychiatric History . . . . .	7-5
Developmental History . . . . .	7-5
Family History . . . . .	7-6
Medical History . . . . .	7-6
Social History . . . . .	7-6
Mental Status Examination . . . . .	7-6
Diagnostic Criteria . . . . .	7-6
Symptoms of Schizophrenia . . . . .	7-6
Positive Symptoms . . . . .	7-6
Hallucinations . . . . .	7-7
Delusions . . . . .	7-7
Disorganized Thinking . . . . .	7-7
Disorganized Behavior . . . . .	7-7
Catatonic Behavior . . . . .	7-7
Negative Symptoms . . . . .	7-7
Cognitive Symptoms . . . . .	7-7
<i>DSM-IV</i> Criteria for Schizophrenia and Related Disorders . . . . .	7-7
<i>DSM-IV</i> Criteria for Schizophrenia . . . . .	7-8
<i>DSM-IV</i> Criteria for Schizoaffective Disorder . . . . .	7-8
<i>DSM-IV</i> Criteria for Substance-Induced Psychotic Disorder . . . . .	7-12
How to Take a History . . . . .	7-12
Identify the Chief Complaint . . . . .	7-16
Identify the Psychotic Symptoms . . . . .	7-16
Determine Whether Psychotic Symptoms Should Be Classified as Primary (Independent) or Substance Induced . . . . .	7-16
Determine Whether Disorder Should Be Classified as Schizophrenia or Schizoaffective Disorder . . . . .	7-17
Ask About Past Treatments . . . . .	7-17
Examine Family History . . . . .	7-18
Ask About Suicide and Potential for Violence . . . . .	7-18
Ask About Other Psychiatric Disorders . . . . .	7-19
Take Brief Developmental Childhood History . . . . .	7-19
Ask About Trauma and Abuse . . . . .	7-19
Ask About Family or Home Environment . . . . .	7-19
Natural History and Etiology . . . . .	7-19
Risk Factors and Possible Causative Mechanisms . . . . .	7-19
Course of Schizophrenia in Relation to Course of Substance Use Over Lifetime . . . . .	7-20
Issues Involved in Diagnosing Schizophrenia in Substance-Dependent Patients . . . . .	7-20
Distinguishing Primary Schizophrenia From Substance-Induced Psychosis or Mood Disorder . . . . .	7-20
Conduct Thorough Psychiatric Evaluation . . . . .	7-21
Assess Substance Use . . . . .	7-21

Recognize Diagnosis as an Ongoing Process . . . . .	7-21
Maintain Nonjudgmental Stance . . . . .	7-22
Avoid Making Diagnosis of Schizophrenia Based Only on Negative Symptoms . . . . .	7-22
Consider All Symptoms of Substance Intoxication and Withdrawal . . . . .	7-22
Be Aware of Attempts to Hide Substance Use . . . . .	7-22
Substances Often Used by Patients With Schizophrenia . . . . .	7-23
Alcohol . . . . .	7-23
Cannabis . . . . .	7-23
Hallucinogens . . . . .	7-23
Psychostimulants . . . . .	7-24
Nicotine . . . . .	7-24
Club Drugs . . . . .	7-24
Instruments and Methods for Screening and Diagnosis . . . . .	7-25
Screening and Assessment Instruments . . . . .	7-25
Diagnostic Instruments . . . . .	7-25
Psychotic Disorders Due to General Medical Condition . . . . .	7-25
Treatment Options . . . . .	7-27
Treatments for Schizophrenia . . . . .	7-27
Importance of Integrated Treatment . . . . .	7-27
Antipsychotic Medication Therapy for Treatment of Schizophrenia . . . . .	7-27
Medication Treatment of Co-Occurring Substance Use Disorders . . . . .	7-28
Antipsychotic Medications . . . . .	7-28
Benzodiazepines, Barbiturates, and Opiates . . . . .	7-28
Medications for Alcohol Abuse . . . . .	7-28
Medications for Nicotine Dependence . . . . .	7-29
Antidepressant and Mood-Stabilizing Medications . . . . .	7-30
Treatment of Co-Occurring Medical Disorders . . . . .	7-30
Psychotherapies for Co-Occurring Schizophrenia and Substance Abuse . . . . .	7-30
Supportive Psychotherapy . . . . .	7-30
Psychoeducation . . . . .	7-31
Cognitive Behavioral Therapy . . . . .	7-31
Behavioral Therapy . . . . .	7-31
Skills Building Therapy . . . . .	7-31
Cognitive Enhancement Therapy . . . . .	7-31
Co-Occurring Substance Abuse Therapy . . . . .	7-31
Motivational Enhancement . . . . .	7-32
Case Management and Assertive Case Management . . . . .	7-32

Treatment of Schizophrenia in Substance-Abusing Patients:  
 What Is the Evidence? . . . . . 7-32  
 How to Manage Patients Who Cannot Achieve Abstinence . . . . . 7-33  
 Treatment Planning for the Case Example . . . . . 7-34  
 Summary . . . . . 7-35  
 Suggestions for Further Reading . . . . . 7-35  
 References . . . . . 7-37

**PART 4: PERSONALITY DISORDERS . . . . . P4-1**

**Chapter 8: Antisocial Personality Disorder in Patients With Substance Use Disorders**

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Introduction . . . . . 8-2  
 Case Presentation . . . . . 8-3  
 Chief Complaint . . . . . 8-3  
 Patient History . . . . . 8-3  
     Alcohol and Drug History . . . . . 8-3  
     Other Psychiatric History . . . . . 8-4  
     Developmental History . . . . . 8-4  
     Educational History . . . . . 8-4  
     Family History . . . . . 8-4  
     Medical History . . . . . 8-4  
     Employment History . . . . . 8-5  
     Criminal History . . . . . 8-5  
     Relationship History . . . . . 8-5  
 Mental Status Examination . . . . . 8-5  
 Diagnostic Criteria . . . . . 8-5  
 Making Diagnosis Using *DSM-IV* . . . . . 8-5  
 How to Take a History . . . . . 8-10  
     Assess for Conduct Disorder . . . . . 8-10  
         Relationships With Parents and  
         Other Authority Figures . . . . . 8-10  
         Relationships With Peers . . . . . 8-10  
         Educational History . . . . . 8-11  
         Violence and Criminal History . . . . . 8-11  
     Assess for Antisocial Personality Disorder . . . . . 8-11  
         Employment History . . . . . 8-11  
         Relationship History . . . . . 8-12  
         Violence and Criminal History . . . . . 8-12  
         Patient's Appraisal of Past Behaviors . . . . . 8-12  
     Identify Other Major Psychiatric Disorders . . . . . 8-12  
     Assess Current Suicidal and Homicidal Thinking . . . . . 8-13

Natural History and Etiology . . . . .	8-13
Risk Factors and Possible Causative Mechanisms . . . . .	8-13
Course of Disorder . . . . .	8-14
Issues Involved in Diagnosing Antisocial Personality Disorder in Substance-Dependent Patients . . . . .	8-15
Instruments and Methods for Screening and Diagnosis . . . . .	8-16
Screening Instruments . . . . .	8-16
Diagnostic Instruments . . . . .	8-16
Differential Diagnosis and Overlapping Disorders . . . . .	8-17
Depressive Disorders . . . . .	8-17
Bipolar Spectrum Disorders . . . . .	8-17
Anxiety Disorders . . . . .	8-17
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder . . . . .	8-18
Medical Problems . . . . .	8-18
Treatment Planning . . . . .	8-18
Development of Therapeutic Relationship . . . . .	8-18
Develop Empathy Toward Patients . . . . .	8-19
Praise Patients (Rather Than Criticize) . . . . .	8-19
Set Limits . . . . .	8-19
Use Team Approach in Treatment . . . . .	8-19
Contingency Management . . . . .	8-19
Individual Therapy . . . . .	8-20
Motivational Interviewing . . . . .	8-20
Group and Community-Oriented Therapies . . . . .	8-21
Medications . . . . .	8-21
Treatment Planning for the Case Example . . . . .	8-21
Summary . . . . .	8-23
Suggestions for Further Reading . . . . .	8-23
References . . . . .	8-24

**Chapter 9: Borderline Personality Disorder in Patients With  
Substance Use Disorders**

*Andrew Ekblad, M.A., Alexander L. Chapman, Ph.D., and Thomas R. Lynch, Ph.D.*

Introduction . . . . .	9-2
Case Presentation . . . . .	9-3
Chief Complaint . . . . .	9-4
Assessment of Domains of Dysregulation . . . . .	9-4
Behavior Dysregulation . . . . .	9-4
Emotion Dysregulation . . . . .	9-4
Cognitive Dysregulation . . . . .	9-4
Interpersonal Dysfunction . . . . .	9-4
Report From Relatives . . . . .	9-5
Diagnosis . . . . .	9-5



Diagnostic Criteria .....	9-5
Natural History and Etiology .....	9-6
Instruments and Methods for Screening and Diagnosis .....	9-10
Differential Diagnosis and Comorbid Psychiatric Disorders .....	9-10
Borderline Personality Disorder and Substance Use Disorders .....	9-10
Comorbidity With Personality Disorders .....	9-11
Comorbidity With Other Psychiatric Disorders .....	9-11
Treatment Options .....	9-12
Importance of Careful Assessment of Symptoms for Effective Treatment Planning .....	9-12
Challenges of Treatment .....	9-12
Psychotherapeutic Approaches .....	9-13
Medications .....	9-13
Dialectical Behavior Therapy .....	9-15
Theoretical Foundations of Dialectical Behavior Therapy .....	9-15
Dialectical Behavior Therapy’s Conceptualization of Borderline Personality Disorder .....	9-16
Standard Dialectical Behavior Therapy for Treatment of Substance Use Disorders .....	9-17
Modified Dialectical Behavior Therapy for Treatment of Substance Use Disorders .....	9-18
Individual Therapy .....	9-19
Group Therapy .....	9-21
Case Management .....	9-23
Studies on the Effectiveness of Dialectical Behavior Therapy for Substance Use Disorders .....	9-23
Treatment Planning for the Case Example .....	9-24
Summary .....	9-25
Suggestions for Further Reading .....	9-25
References .....	9-26

**PART 5: IMPULSE CONTROL DISORDERS AND EATING DISORDERS** ..... P5-1

**Chapter 10: Pathological Gambling Among Patients With Substance Use Disorders**

*Carlos Blanco, M.D., Ph.D., Oshra Cohen, Ph.D., Juan José Luján, M.D., and Edelgard Wulfert, Ph.D.*

Introduction .....	10-2
Case Presentation .....	10-2
Diagnostic Criteria .....	10-3
<i>DSM-IV</i> Criteria for Pathological Gambling .....	10-3
Conceptualization of Gambling on a Continuum .....	10-5
Debate About the Classification of Pathological Gambling .....	10-5

Natural History and Etiology . . . . .	10-5
Onset, Course, and Consequences of Pathological Gambling . . . . .	10-5
Possible Causative Mechanisms . . . . .	10-6
Psychological Theories . . . . .	10-6
Biological Theories . . . . .	10-7
Genetic Studies . . . . .	10-7
Instruments and Methods for Screening and Diagnosis . . . . .	10-8
Differential Diagnosis and Overlapping Disorders . . . . .	10-9
Differentiating Types of Gamblers . . . . .	10-9
Social Gamblers . . . . .	10-9
Gamblers With Bipolar Disorder . . . . .	10-9
Professional Gamblers . . . . .	10-10
Pathological Gambling and Substance Use Disorders . . . . .	10-10
Comorbidity With Other Psychiatric Disorders . . . . .	10-11
Treatment Options . . . . .	10-11
Psychological Treatment . . . . .	10-11
Pharmacological Treatment . . . . .	10-12
Summary . . . . .	10-13
Suggestions for Further Reading . . . . .	10-13
Authors' Note . . . . .	10-13
References . . . . .	10-14

**Chapter 11: Intermittent Explosive Disorder and Impulsive Aggression in Patients With Substance Use Disorders**

*Stephen J. Donovan, M.D.*

Introduction . . . . .	11-1
Case Presentations . . . . .	11-3
Case 1 . . . . .	11-3
Case 2 . . . . .	11-3
Case 3 . . . . .	11-4
Case 4 . . . . .	11-5
Case 5 . . . . .	11-5
Case 6 . . . . .	11-6
Case 7 . . . . .	11-6
<i>DSM-IV</i> Criteria . . . . .	11-7
Natural History and Etiology . . . . .	11-7
Issues Involved in Making a Diagnosis in Substance-Dependent Patients . . . . .	11-9
Instruments and Methods for Screening and Diagnosis . . . . .	11-9
Differential Diagnosis and Overlapping Disorders . . . . .	11-10
Treatment Options . . . . .	11-12
Psychosocial and Behavioral Treatments . . . . .	11-13
Pharmacologic Treatments . . . . .	11-14
Organization of Services . . . . .	11-15

Summary . . . . .	11-16
Suggestions for Further Reading . . . . .	11-16
Author's Note . . . . .	11-16
References . . . . .	11-17

**Chapter 12: Eating Disorders in Patients With Substance Use Disorders: Bulimia, Anorexia, Overeating Disorder, and Obesity**

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Introduction . . . . .	12-2
Case Presentation . . . . .	12-3
Chief Complaint . . . . .	12-3
Patient History . . . . .	12-4
Alcohol and Other Drug History . . . . .	12-4
Psychiatric History . . . . .	12-4
Developmental History . . . . .	12-5
Treatment History . . . . .	12-5
Family History . . . . .	12-5
Medical History . . . . .	12-5
Social History . . . . .	12-5
Mental Status Examination . . . . .	12-5
Diagnostic Criteria and Technique . . . . .	12-6
<i>DSM-IV</i> Criteria for Eating Disorders . . . . .	12-6
How to Take a History . . . . .	12-8
Outline Substance Abuse History . . . . .	12-8
Examine Family History . . . . .	12-12
Take Brief Developmental or Childhood History . . . . .	12-12
Ask About Trauma and Abuse . . . . .	12-12
Ask About Other Psychiatric Disorders . . . . .	12-12
Cause of Eating Disorders and Course of Illness . . . . .	12-13
Risk Factors and Possible Causative Mechanisms . . . . .	12-13
Course of Eating Disorders in Relation to Course of Substance Use Over Lifetime . . . . .	12-15
Issues Involved in Making the Diagnosis in Substance-Dependent Patients . . .	12-16
Instruments and Methods for Screening and Diagnosis . . . . .	12-16
Screening and Preliminary Assessment Instruments . . . . .	12-16
Diagnostic Instruments . . . . .	12-18
Associated Disorders . . . . .	12-19
Psychiatric Disorders . . . . .	12-19
Medical Disorders . . . . .	12-19
Treatment Planning . . . . .	12-21
Treatments for Eating Disorders . . . . .	12-21
Cognitive Behavioral Therapy . . . . .	12-21

Interpersonal Psychotherapy . . . . .	12-22
Pharmacotherapy . . . . .	12-23
Combination Treatments . . . . .	12-24
Determining Level of Care for Treatment . . . . .	12-24
Organization of Treatment Services . . . . .	12-25
Treatment Planning for the Case Example . . . . .	12-27
Summary . . . . .	12-28
Suggestions for Further Reading . . . . .	12-28
Authors' Note . . . . .	12-30
References . . . . .	12-30
<b>PART 6: SPECIAL ISSUES . . . . .</b>	<b>P6-1</b>
<b>Chapter 13: Cigarette Smoking Among Patients With Substance Use Disorders</b>	
<i>Eric Schindler, Ph.D., Patricia Penn, Ph.D., and Malcolm S. Reid, Ph.D.</i>	
Introduction . . . . .	13-2
Importance of Addressing Nicotine Dependence in the Context of Other Drug Treatment . . . . .	13-2
Prevalence of Smoking in Substance Abusing Populations and in the General Population . . . . .	13-3
Consequences of Tobacco Use . . . . .	13-3
Importance and Feasibility of Treating Tobacco Use . . . . .	13-3
Case Presentations . . . . .	13-4
Case 1 . . . . .	13-4
Case 2 . . . . .	13-4
Diagnostic Criteria . . . . .	13-5
Ask About Smoking . . . . .	13-5
Other Forms of Nicotine Delivery . . . . .	13-8
Nicotine Dependence: Often Overlooked or Misunderstood . . . . .	13-9
Natural History and Etiology . . . . .	13-9
Genetic and Environmental Determinants of Nicotine Dependence . . . . .	13-9
Cigarettes as a Gateway Drug . . . . .	13-10
Instruments and Methods for Screening and Diagnosis . . . . .	13-10
Biological Markers of Nicotine Use . . . . .	13-11
Self-Report Instruments and Clinician-Administered Assessments . . . . .	13-11
Co-Occurring Substance Abuse and Psychiatric Disorders . . . . .	13-11
Treatment Options . . . . .	13-12
Context of Counseling and Approach to Patient . . . . .	13-13
The Five A's . . . . .	13-13
The Five R's . . . . .	13-14
Setting a Quit Date . . . . .	13-15
Effects of Nicotine Withdrawal and Importance of Monitoring for Emergence of Depression . . . . .	13-15

Multiple Attempts to Quit . . . . .	13-15
Pharmacotherapies . . . . .	13-16
Nicotine Replacement . . . . .	13-16
Antidepressant Medications . . . . .	13-17
Varenicline (Brand Name Chantix) . . . . .	13-17
Psychosocial Interventions . . . . .	13-18
Self-Help Programs . . . . .	13-18
Motivational Interviewing . . . . .	13-18
Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Relapse Prevention . . . . .	13-19
Contingency Management . . . . .	13-19
Organizational or Systems-Level Interventions . . . . .	13-20
Treatment Planning for the Case Examples . . . . .	13-20
Case 1 . . . . .	13-20
Case 2 . . . . .	13-20
Summary . . . . .	13-21
Suggestions for Further Reading . . . . .	13-22
Authors' Note . . . . .	13-22
References . . . . .	13-22

**Chapter 14: Common Medical Illnesses in Patients With Substance Use and Psychiatric Disorders**

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Introduction . . . . .	14-4
Obstacles Faced by Substance Abusers in Obtaining Medical Care . . . . .	14-4
Significant Morbidity and Mortality Related to Substance Abuse . . . . .	14-4
Need for Coordination of Care . . . . .	14-5
Chapter Overview . . . . .	14-6
Health Issues in Patients With Psychiatric Disorders . . . . .	14-6
Medical Problems in Patients With Substance Use Disorders . . . . .	14-9
Medical Problems Related to Drugs of Abuse . . . . .	14-9
Alcohol . . . . .	14-9
Alcohol Intoxication . . . . .	14-9
Alcohol Withdrawal . . . . .	14-10
Neurological Problems . . . . .	14-10
Cardiac Problems . . . . .	14-11
Gastrointestinal Problems . . . . .	14-11
Metabolic/Endocrine Problems . . . . .	14-11
Hematopoietic Problems . . . . .	14-11
Malignancy . . . . .	14-11
Other Problems . . . . .	14-11
Cocaine . . . . .	14-12
Cocaine Intoxication . . . . .	14-12

Cocaine Withdrawal . . . . .	14-12
Neurological Problems . . . . .	14-12
Cardiac Problems . . . . .	14-12
Gastrointestinal Problems . . . . .	14-12
Other Problems . . . . .	14-12
Methamphetamine . . . . .	14-13
Methamphetamine Intoxication . . . . .	14-13
Methamphetamine Withdrawal . . . . .	14-13
Cardiovascular Problems . . . . .	14-13
Pulmonary Problems . . . . .	14-13
Neurological Problems . . . . .	14-13
Other Problems . . . . .	14-13
Opioids . . . . .	14-14
Opioid Intoxication . . . . .	14-14
Opioid Withdrawal . . . . .	14-14
Medical Problems . . . . .	14-14
Tobacco . . . . .	14-14
Nicotine Withdrawal . . . . .	14-14
Neurological Problems . . . . .	14-15
Cardiac Problems . . . . .	14-15
Pulmonary Problems . . . . .	14-15
Malignancy . . . . .	14-15
Kidney Problems . . . . .	14-15
Hematologic Problems . . . . .	14-15
Endocrine Problems . . . . .	14-15
Marijuana . . . . .	14-15
Marijuana Intoxication . . . . .	14-16
Marijuana Withdrawal . . . . .	14-16
Cardiac Problems . . . . .	14-16
Pulmonary Problems . . . . .	14-16
Immunologic Problems . . . . .	14-17
Reproductive Problems . . . . .	14-17
Sedative-Hypnotics . . . . .	14-17
Benzodiazepines . . . . .	14-17
Zolpidem (Ambien) . . . . .	14-18
Zaleplon (Sonata) . . . . .	14-18
Desyrel (Trazodone) . . . . .	14-18
Tricyclic Antidepressants . . . . .	14-18
Other Sedating Medications . . . . .	14-18
Ecstasy (Methylenedioxymethamphetamine) . . . . .	14-18
Methylenedioxymethamphetamine Intoxication . . . . .	14-18
Neurological Problems . . . . .	14-19

Gamma Hydroxybutyrate . . . . .	14-19
Gamma Hydroxybutyrate Intoxication . . . . .	14-19
Gamma Hydroxybutyrate Withdrawal . . . . .	14-19
Hallucinogens . . . . .	14-19
Lysergic Acid Diethylamide Overdose . . . . .	14-19
Lysergic Acid Diethylamide Withdrawal . . . . .	14-20
Disorders Related to Route of Drug Administration . . . . .	14-20
Injection Drug Use . . . . .	14-20
Inhaled Drug Use . . . . .	14-21
Common Medical Conditions in the Dual Diagnosis Population . . . . .	14-22
Acute Bronchitis . . . . .	14-22
Asthma . . . . .	14-22
Back Pain . . . . .	14-22
Cancer . . . . .	14-24
Chronic Bronchitis and Emphysema . . . . .	14-24
Diabetes Mellitus . . . . .	14-24
Heart Disease . . . . .	14-24
Hypertension . . . . .	14-24
Nutritional Deficiencies . . . . .	14-25
Obesity . . . . .	14-25
Seizures . . . . .	14-25
Serotonin Syndrome . . . . .	14-25
Sexually Transmitted Diseases . . . . .	14-25
Skin Infections . . . . .	14-26
Sleep Disorders . . . . .	14-26
Stroke . . . . .	14-26
Reasonable Routine Medical Examination for Drug Users . . . . .	14-26
Medical History and Physical Examination . . . . .	14-26
Basic Laboratory Workup . . . . .	14-27
Complete Blood Count . . . . .	14-28
Liver Function Tests . . . . .	14-28
Glucose . . . . .	14-30
Creatinine . . . . .	14-30
Triglycerides . . . . .	14-30
Cholesterol . . . . .	14-30
Rapid Plasma Reagin . . . . .	14-30
Urinalysis . . . . .	14-30
Thyroid Stimulating Hormone . . . . .	14-30
Tuberculosis . . . . .	14-30
Hepatitis, Human Immunodeficiency Virus, and Sexually Transmitted Diseases . . . . .	14-30
Additional Medical Assessments . . . . .	14-30

Special Issues . . . . .	14-31
Tuberculosis . . . . .	14-31
Hepatitis . . . . .	14-32
Human Immunodeficiency Virus . . . . .	14-33
Pain . . . . .	14-34
Summary . . . . .	14-35
Suggestions for Further Reading . . . . .	14-35
References . . . . .	14-37

**Chapter 15: Substance Abuse During Adolescence**

*Jeffrey J. Wilson, M.D.*

Introduction . . . . .	15-2
Case Presentation . . . . .	15-3
Diagnostic Criteria . . . . .	15-3
Natural History and Etiology . . . . .	15-4
Substance Use . . . . .	15-4
Gender and Ethnic Differences . . . . .	15-4
Substance Use Disorders . . . . .	15-4
Availability of Substances . . . . .	15-5
Gateway Drugs . . . . .	15-5
Family Factors and Development of Substance Use Disorders . . . . .	15-5
Psychological Factors . . . . .	15-6
Antisocial Behavior . . . . .	15-6
Special Issues in Diagnosis of Substance Abuse in Adolescents . . . . .	15-7
Early Onset Versus Late Onset of Substance Use Disorders . . . . .	15-7
Diagnostic Orphans . . . . .	15-7
Alcohol Use Disorders During Adolescence . . . . .	15-7
Risk Factors for Persistent Substance Use Disorders . . . . .	15-8
Consequences of Improper Diagnosis . . . . .	15-8
Adaptive Impairment . . . . .	15-8
Abstinence . . . . .	15-8
Instruments and Methods for Screening and Diagnosis . . . . .	15-9
Standardized Instruments . . . . .	15-10
Therapeutic Environment and Confidentiality . . . . .	15-10
Urine Toxicology . . . . .	15-11
Differential Diagnosis and Comorbidity . . . . .	15-11
Application of Diagnostic Criteria to Case Example . . . . .	15-11
Challenges in Differential Diagnosis . . . . .	15-12
Negative Affectivity . . . . .	15-12
Substance-Induced Symptoms . . . . .	15-13
Mood and Anxiety Disorders . . . . .	15-13
Psychiatric Comorbidity . . . . .	15-14



Treatment Options . . . . .	15-14
Treatment of Case Example . . . . .	15-14
Motivational Interviewing . . . . .	15-14
Adolescent Substance Abuse Research . . . . .	15-15
Family Therapies . . . . .	15-15
Cognitive Behavioral Methods . . . . .	15-16
Multisystemic Therapy . . . . .	15-16
Inpatient/Residential Treatments . . . . .	15-16
Treating Psychiatric Comorbidity . . . . .	15-17
Summary . . . . .	15-18
Suggestions for Further Reading . . . . .	15-18
Author’s Note . . . . .	15-19
References . . . . .	15-19

**Chapter 16: Pain in Patients With Substance Use Disorders**

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Introduction . . . . .	16-2
Four Components of Pain . . . . .	16-3
Physical Component . . . . .	16-3
Pain Perception . . . . .	16-4
Transduction . . . . .	16-4
Transmission . . . . .	16-4
Perception . . . . .	16-4
Modulation . . . . .	16-4
Aspects of Physical Pain . . . . .	16-4
Pain Generator . . . . .	16-4
Duration of Pain . . . . .	16-4
Intermittent Versus Persistent Pain . . . . .	16-4
Malignant Versus Nonmalignant Pain . . . . .	16-5
Variability of Pain Intensity . . . . .	16-5
Quality of Pain . . . . .	16-5
Severity of Pain . . . . .	16-5
Factors That Exacerbate or Reduce Pain . . . . .	16-6
Emotional/Affective Component . . . . .	16-6
Personality Style . . . . .	16-6
Emotional Distress . . . . .	16-6
Psychiatric Comorbidity . . . . .	16-7
Somatization Disorder . . . . .	16-7
Hypochondriasis . . . . .	16-7
Pain Disorder . . . . .	16-11
Cognitive Component . . . . .	16-11
Behavioral Component . . . . .	16-11

Chronic Pain Syndrome . . . . .	16-13
Pain and Substance Abuse: Issues in Evaluation and Treatment . . . . .	16-13
Overuse . . . . .	16-14
Drug Seeking . . . . .	16-14
Use for Wrong Reasons . . . . .	16-14
Concurrent Abuse of Nonopioid Substances . . . . .	16-14
Reactivated or New Onset Drug Use Disorders . . . . .	16-15
Diversion . . . . .	16-15
Undertreatment and “Pseudo-Addiction” . . . . .	16-15
Reasons That Doctors Undertreat Pain . . . . .	16-16
Myth #1: Tolerance Leads to Continual Increases in Doses . . . . .	16-16
Myth #2: Tolerance Is Synonymous With Addiction . . . . .	16-16
Myth #3: Physical Dependence Is Synonymous With Addiction . . . . .	16-16
Common Prescribing Practices That May Interfere With Effective Management of Pain . . . . .	16-17
Using Short-Acting Analgesic Medications . . . . .	16-17
Using <i>Pro Re Nata</i> (as Needed) Analgesic Medication . . . . .	16-17
Giving Pain Medication at Longest Possible Interval to Prevent Addiction . . . . .	16-17
Treatment for Pain . . . . .	16-18
Pharmacotherapy . . . . .	16-18
Prescribing Practices for Patients With Opioid Dependence and Pain . . . . .	16-20
Selecting Opioid Analgesics for Pain Treatment . . . . .	16-21
Behavioral Interventions . . . . .	16-22
Role of Mental Health Professionals in Evaluation Process . . . . .	16-22
Role of Substance Abuse Treatment Clinician in Treatment of Patients With Pain and Substance Use Disorders . . . . .	16-24
Treatment of Patients Who View Pain as Primary Problem . . . . .	16-25
Treatment of Patients Who View Addiction as Primary Problem . . . . .	16-25
Assessing Pain . . . . .	16-27
Selecting a Behavioral Treatment . . . . .	16-28
Coordination of Care . . . . .	16-29
Suggestions for Further Reading . . . . .	16-30
Authors’ Note . . . . .	16-30
References . . . . .	16-31

**Chapter 17: Suicide and Substance Abuse***Richard K. Ries, M.D.*

Introduction . . . . .	17-1
Suicide Is a Common Cause of Death in Adolescents and Adults . . . . .	17-1
Clinicians Who Treat Patients With Substance Use Disorders Need to Know About Suicide . . . . .	17-2
Suicide Risk Factors . . . . .	17-2
Gender . . . . .	17-2
Guns and Other Lethal Means . . . . .	17-3
Age and Ethnicity . . . . .	17-3
Substance Use and Other Psychiatric Disorders . . . . .	17-3
Past History and Family History of Suicide Attempts . . . . .	17-3
Neurobiology and Tendency Toward Impulsive Aggression . . . . .	17-4
Assessing Risk for Assault or Homicide . . . . .	17-4
Other Risk Factors and Combinations of Risk Factors . . . . .	17-4
Roles of Specific Substances in Suicides and Accidents . . . . .	17-5
Summary . . . . .	17-5
Preparedness for Dealing With Patients' Suicidal Thoughts and Plans . . . . .	17-6
How to Screen Patients for Suicide Risk . . . . .	17-8
How to Assess Patients' Risk of Suicidal Danger . . . . .	17-11
Persuading Someone to Get Help . . . . .	17-11
Referral . . . . .	17-12
Group Therapy With Suicidal Patients . . . . .	17-12
Conclusion . . . . .	17-13
Suggestions for Further Reading . . . . .	17-13
References . . . . .	17-13

**Chapter 18: Drug Interactions in the Pharmacological Treatment of Substance Use Disorders***Elinore F. McCance-Katz, M.D., Ph.D.*

Introduction . . . . .	18-1
Medication Levels and Drug Interactions . . . . .	18-2
Nonadherence . . . . .	18-2
Drug Metabolism and Elimination by the Liver or Kidneys . . . . .	18-3
Drug Interactions: Substrates, Inhibitors, and Inducers . . . . .	18-3
Clinical Significance of Drug Interactions . . . . .	18-4
Genetic Influence on Drug Metabolism . . . . .	18-10
Drug Interactions Between Opioids and Medications Used to Treat Concomitant Illness . . . . .	18-11

Consequences of Undetected Drug Interactions . . . . .	18-11
Case Presentation . . . . .	18-11
Consequences of Drug Interactions Between Opioids and Antiretroviral Therapies . . . . .	18-12
Summary . . . . .	18-13
Suggestions for Further Reading . . . . .	18-13
Author’s Note . . . . .	18-14
References . . . . .	18-14

**PART 7: FUTURE DIRECTIONS . . . . . P7-1**

**Chapter 19: Choosing Treatment Services and Levels of Care: American Society of Addiction Medicine Patient Placement Criteria**

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Introduction . . . . .	19-2
Case Presentation . . . . .	19-2
American Society of Addiction Medicine Criteria . . . . .	19-3
Background and Rationale for Patient Placement Criteria . . . . .	19-3
Levels of Care (From Most Intensive to Least Intensive) . . . . .	19-3
Level IV: Medically Managed Intensive Inpatient Treatment . . . . .	19-3
Level III: Residential/Inpatient Treatment . . . . .	19-3
Level II: Intensive Outpatient Treatment/Partial Hospitalization . . . . .	19-4
Level I: Outpatient Treatment . . . . .	19-4
Level 0.5: Early Intervention . . . . .	19-4
Dual Diagnosis Capacity of Program . . . . .	19-4
Validity of American Society of Addiction Medicine Criteria . . . . .	19-5
Standard Implementation: American Society of Addiction Medicine PPC-2R Assessment Software . . . . .	19-5
Clinical Institute Withdrawal Assessment-Alcohol/Revised and Clinical Institute Narcotic Assessment . . . . .	19-6
Addiction Severity Index . . . . .	19-6
Other Question Categories . . . . .	19-6
Research Findings on Matching to Level of Care With American Society of Addiction Medicine Patient Placement Criteria . . . . .	19-7
Research Findings on Comorbidity and Related Problems and American Society of Addiction Medicine Patient Placement Criteria . . . . .	19-7
Comprehensive Continuous Integrated System of Care . . . . .	19-8
Dual Diagnosis: Expectation, Not Exception . . . . .	19-8
Importance of Empathic, Hopeful, Integrated, and Continuing Relationship in Treatment . . . . .	19-8
Importance of Individualized Treatment With Structured Approach . . . . .	19-9
Case Management . . . . .	19-9

Chicken and Egg Conundrum: Mental Illness and Substance Use . . . . .	19-9
Temporal Factors: Context of “Disease and Recovery” Model . . . . .	19-10
No One-Size-Fits-All Approach . . . . .	19-10
Clinical Outcomes Must Be Individualized . . . . .	19-11
Multidimensional Patient Placement Criteria Issues in Comorbid Patients:	
Applications to Case Presentation . . . . .	19-11
Manifestation of Clinical Issues in American Society of	
Addiction Medicine Patient Placement Criteria Dimensions . . . . .	19-11
Interactions Across Dimensions . . . . .	19-11
Proper Placement of Patient in Case Presentation . . . . .	19-12
Conclusion . . . . .	19-12
Suggestions for Further Reading . . . . .	19-13
References . . . . .	19-13

**Chapter 20: Directions for Future Research on Treating Co-Occurring Substance Use and Psychiatric Disorders**

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Introduction . . . . .	20-2
Improving Systems of Care . . . . .	20-2
Adolescent Case Study Involving Multiple Stakeholders . . . . .	20-2
Integration of Services . . . . .	20-3
Need for Evaluation and Modification of Mental Health	
and Drug Treatment Systems . . . . .	20-3
Need for Coordination of Systems . . . . .	20-4
Network for the Improvement of Addiction Treatment . . . . .	20-4
Training and Workforce Development . . . . .	20-5
Agency Efforts to Implement Evidence-Based Practice . . . . .	20-5
Staffing Issues . . . . .	20-5
Research to Address Staffing Issues . . . . .	20-6
Need for Evaluation and Modification of Training	
and Licensing Requirements . . . . .	20-7
Implementation of Evidence-Based Practices . . . . .	20-7
Adult Case Study With Domestic Violence	
and Family Issues . . . . .	20-7
Treatment and Practice Guidelines . . . . .	20-7
Need for Targeted Interventions for Special Populations . . . . .	20-8
Treatment for Adult Case Example With Domestic Violence	
and Family Issues . . . . .	20-8
Recovery Processes . . . . .	20-9
Adult Case Study With Homeless Individual . . . . .	20-9
Need for Further Study of Factors That Impact Recovery . . . . .	20-9
Summary and Directions for Future Research . . . . .	20-10

Suggestions for Further Reading .....	20-11
Authors' Note .....	20-11
References .....	20-11
<b>Appendix A: Continuing Education and Clinical Skills Examination .....</b>	<b>A-1</b>
<b>Appendix B: Table of Abbreviations and Acronyms .....</b>	<b>B-1</b>
<b>Index .....</b>	<b>I-I</b>
<b>Continuing Education and Clinical Skills Examination Answer Sheet .....</b>	<b>AS-1</b>

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# Introduction and Overview

by Edward V. Nunes, M.D., Jeffrey Selzer, M.D., Petros Levounis, M.D., M.A., and Carrie A. Davies, B.S.

Call to Clinicians Treating Substance-Dependent Patients to Learn	
About Psychiatric Comorbidity. . . . .	xxxiii
Importance of Addressing Psychiatric Comorbidity . . . . .	xxxiv
Brief History of Research on Psychiatric Comorbidity . . . . .	xxxiv
Genesis of This Book. . . . .	xxxv
Role of Specialists and Consultants and Rising Need for Generalists . . . . .	xxxvi
Organization of This Book. . . . .	xxxvii
Chapters on Psychiatric Disorders . . . . .	xxxvii
Chapters on Special Issues and Directions for Future Research . . . . .	xxxviii
Self-Exam . . . . .	xxxviii
Application of Acquired Skills and Continued Study . . . . .	xl
Benefits of Practice in Using Structured Diagnostic Interviews . . . . .	xl
Benefits of Clinical Practice. . . . .	xl
Authors' Note. . . . .	xli
References . . . . .	xli

## CALL TO CLINICIANS TREATING SUBSTANCE-DEPENDENT PATIENTS TO LEARN ABOUT PSYCHIATRIC COMORBIDITY

This book was written to teach clinicians who treat patients with alcohol and drug dependence about the psychiatric disorders that commonly co-occur with addictive disorders. Potential readers include anyone working in alcohol and drug treatment programs or specializing in treatment of addictive disorders—from counselors and medical staff to supervisors and program directors—including clinicians and managers with little or no prior training in psychopathology or psychiatric diagnosis and treatment. This book was written to serve as a primer that will stimulate interest in co-occurring psychopathologies and inspire confidence that achievement of a working knowledge of this topic is within the grasp of any clinician and will yield more effective clinicians. We also hope that clinicians from mental health care settings, psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers will refer to this book as they seek to broaden their knowledge of the special issues involved in psychiatric diagnosis and treatment planning for patients with co-occurring mental disorders and addictive disorders.

As readers learn more about psychiatric disorders, we hope that they not only gain familiarity with the academic literature and broaden their knowledge base, but also acquire skills necessary for screening and treating psychiatric disorders including mastery of the skills required for conducting a psychiatric diagnostic interview, making

tentative diagnoses, and identifying patients who should be referred for specialty care. One does not need to become a specialist in treating psychiatric disorders to be able to tailor a treatment plan to the unique needs of dually diagnosed patients. Clinicians can better serve their patients simply by becoming familiar with the treatment options for psychiatric disorders in order to facilitate proper referral of patients to specialty care (e.g., psychotherapy, medication treatment), monitor patients, and provide follow-up.

We believe that any motivated clinician can learn to conduct a basic psychiatric diagnostic interview, understand how psychiatric disorders may impact treatment of addictions, and successfully refer patients to specialty care. By acquiring the skills to diagnose and treat patients with co-occurring psychiatric and substance use disorders, clinicians can improve their treatment alliance with their patients and the overall outcome of their patients' treatment.

## **IMPORTANCE OF ADDRESSING PSYCHIATRIC COMORBIDITY**

Psychiatric comorbidity, most notably the co-occurrence of a psychiatric disorder and substance use disorder, is a common condition that results in tremendous suffering and costs. The presence of a psychiatric disorder increases the risk for the presence of an addictive disorder and vice versa. Much evidence suggests that when these disorders occur together, a patient's prognosis is worse than when the disorders occur alone; evidence also suggests that treatment of both disorders simultaneously in one facility or in a coordinated effort with another facility results in better treatment outcome.

While the caseloads of clinicians in substance abuse treatment programs often contain numerous patients who suffer from one or more psychiatric disorders in addition to a substance use disorder, few of these clinicians have substantial training in diagnosis and treatment of psychiatric disorders. Thus, this book aims to teach clinicians about the diagnosis and treatment of co-occurring psychiatric and substance use disorders. With this knowledge clinicians should be able to more effectively screen dually diagnosed patients, collaborate with mental health care specialists, and improve quality of care for patients with both addictions and other psychiatric disorders.

## **BRIEF HISTORY OF RESEARCH ON PSYCHIATRIC COMORBIDITY**

Attention to co-occurring psychiatric disorders (i.e., a substance use disorder plus another psychiatric disorder) represents a sea change in the mental health field that has occurred over the last decade or two. Historically, the treatment systems for psychiatric disorders and substance use disorders have operated (and largely continue to operate) separately from one another. These two treatment systems have been operated by different state agencies, have offered different treatment programs, have employed different clinicians with different backgrounds in education and training, and have received funding from different sources. Psychiatric clinicians, including psychiatrists, psychologists, and clinical social workers, historically have received little training in diagnosis and management of substance use disorders; similarly, clinicians who treat substance use disorders historically have received training that has focused mainly on diagnosis and treatment of substance use disorders (with little attention to other co-occurring disorders). Dually diagnosed patients have been required to navigate the

two separate treatment systems with little assistance from treatment professionals and often receive inadequate treatment for either or both of their disorders.

Increased interest in co-occurring psychiatric disorders began to emerge in the 1980s. A series of large surveys of the general population documented a high prevalence of psychiatric disorders in the general population and a high rate of co-occurring psychiatric disorders, particularly a combination of substance use disorders and other mental disorders, such as mood and anxiety disorders (Grant, 1995; Grant et al., 2004; Kessler, 1995; Kessler et al., 1994; Regier et al., 1990). The presence of alcoholism or another substance dependence disorder was found to increase a patient's risk of having other psychiatric disorders by a factor of two or more. These findings echoed results from studies that documented high rates of co-occurring psychiatric disorders in samples of patients in treatment for substance use disorders (for a review, see Hasin & Nunes, 1998). Studies also indicated that the presence of co-occurring psychiatric disorders often predicted poor outcome and, interestingly, that psychiatric disorders might play a role in motivating patients to enter treatment for problems with addictions. Later studies suggested that treatment that integrates psychiatric and substance abuse treatment modalities leads to better outcomes for patients with both a psychiatric disorder and substance use disorders (Drake & Mueser, 2001; Hellerstein, Rosenthal, & Miner, 2001; Nunes & Levin, 2004; Weiss, 2004). Over the past decade treatment programs that had focused exclusively on substance use disorders have begun to routinely involve psychiatric consultants in patients' care and to set up services for patients with co-occurring disorders.

## GENESIS OF THIS BOOK

The inspiration for this book grew out of our participation in the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) Clinical Trials Network (CTN). The CTN, which was spearheaded by NIDA director Dr. Alan Leshner to "improv[e] the quality of drug abuse treatment throughout the nation using science as the vehicle" (A. Leshner, personal communication, March 14, 2001), was a bold step in addictions treatment research. Funded by the National Institutes of Health/National Institute on Drug Abuse, the CTN is a nationwide network of research centers and community-based substance abuse treatment programs; the CTN was established in response to a landmark study by the Institute of Medicine (1998) that showed that new innovations in treatment for addictions were not being adopted by treatment providers in routine clinical care of patients with alcohol and drug dependence. New treatment approaches had been developed and rigorously tested in clinical trials, which were funded by the National Institutes of Health and were expensive and painstaking to conduct, but these approaches were rarely used in clinical practice. The CTN conducts rigorous research to test the effectiveness of new treatments for substance dependence in real-world treatment settings (e.g., inner-city methadone clinics). The CTN consists of researchers, clinicians, and program directors from across the United States who are interested in conducting research to improve the quality of care of their patients. The diagnosis and treatment of co-occurring disorders has been an abiding theme in the CTN, which aims to integrate psychiatric treatment into substance abuse treatment (and vice versa) and to ensure that treatment approaches that have proven effective in clinical trials are disseminated to the substance use treatment community.

Inspiration for this book arose from discussions by the editors and many of the contributors during meetings of a working group of the CTN: the Co-Occurring

Disorders Special Interest Group. The Co-Occurring Disorders Special Interest Group was formed within the CTN to identify important problems related to comorbidity that were confronting clinicians and treatment programs in the field and that should be addressed with research. Members of the Co-Occurring Disorders Special Interest Group included individuals whose careers had been devoted to clinical research and many program directors and clinicians from community-based substance abuse treatment programs. One issue that emerged repeatedly during discussions was the need to help clinicians who work in substance abuse treatment settings to learn more about co-occurring psychiatric disorders. Members agreed that while there already was a wealth of evidence suggesting that co-occurring disorders are prevalent among substance-dependent patients and are associated with worse outcome and that integrated treatment approaches (i.e., treatment approaches that address substance abuse and other psychiatric disorders in a coordinated fashion) are effective, further research was needed. This book, which represents the first step in addressing the burning need in the field to make coordinated treatment efforts standard practice, should serve as a practical resource for clinicians who wish to learn about diagnosis and treatment of co-occurring disorders.

## **ROLE OF SPECIALISTS AND CONSULTANTS AND RISING NEED FOR GENERALISTS**

In their book *Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything*, Levitt and Dubner (2005) present an iconoclastic view of American society through the lens of economic theory, and they challenge Americans' tendency to rely on experts in a range of fields from real estate sales to parenting. The authors argue that the services that experts provide may not always match the needs of their clients and that often the information that experts provide is accessible to anyone who is willing to spend time seeking it. Similarly, we believe that knowledge of psychiatric disorders that co-occur with substance use disorders is easily obtainable and that clinicians can better serve their substance-dependent patients by undertaking the psychiatric diagnosis and treatment planning process that might otherwise be delegated to mental health experts. Clinicians and treatment programs that serve substance-dependent patients should not rely solely on psychiatric consultants and specialists for the treatment of patients with psychiatric disorders, and clinicians who work in substance abuse treatment programs should not limit themselves as specialists in only addiction treatment. Instead, clinicians from substance abuse treatment programs should become generalists and acquire a working knowledge of psychiatric diagnosis and treatment that allows them to recognize psychiatric disorders in their patients, adapt their treatment approaches accordingly, and make appropriate referrals for specialized treatment.

We do not intend to dismiss the role of specialists. Indeed, a specialist's skill in treatment and in the fine points of diagnosis results from study, repetition of tasks (e.g., performing numerous psychiatric evaluations), and specialization. Instead, we simply wish to encourage clinicians in substance abuse treatment programs to expand the boundaries of their competencies, become informed about psychiatric disorders, and become more discriminating in referring patients to specialists.

## ORGANIZATION OF THIS BOOK

### Chapters on Psychiatric Disorders

Chapters 1 through 12 provide a primer on the diagnosis and treatment of psychiatric disorders that most commonly co-occur in patients with substance abuse problems, including depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and other disorders of cognition, personality disorders, impulse control disorders, and eating disorders. Each chapter follows the following structure:

- *Case Examples:* These descriptions of cases, which are drawn from the authors' clinical experiences, introduce the psychiatric disorder covered in the chapter and illustrate how the disorder manifests itself in substance-dependent patients.
- *Diagnostic Criteria:* This section describes the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 4th edition (*DSM-IV*) criteria (American Psychiatric Association, 1994) for the disorder that is covered in the chapter and discusses difficulties and special issues that arise in making a diagnosis in substance-dependent patients. Substance abuse can cause psychiatric symptoms, thereby making an accurate diagnosis of some psychiatric disorders in substance-dependent patients difficult. This section also contains tables that summarize the *DSM-IV* criteria, briefly discusses issues that complicate the evaluation of each criterion among substance-dependent patients, and suggests interview questions for each criterion from semistructured interviews, namely the Psychiatric Research Interview for Substance and Mental Disorders (PRISM; Hasin, Samet, Nunes, Meydan, Matseoane, & Waxman, 2006) or the Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-IV-TR Axis I Disorders (SCID-I; First, Spitzer, Gibbon, & Williams, 2002).
- *Natural History and Etiology:* This section discusses the course of the psychiatric illness covered in the chapter (both the course of the illness when it occurs alone and the course of the illness when it occurs in the presence of a substance use disorder), as well as presumed causes of the psychiatric disorder and risk factors for developing the disorder.
- *Issues Involved in Making a Diagnosis in Substance-Dependent Patients:* This section examines the potential for confusing symptoms of substance toxicity or withdrawal with symptoms of a psychiatric syndrome.
- *Instruments and Methods for Screening and Diagnosis:* This section provides descriptions of screening and diagnostic instruments, with suggestions on how they might be used by clinicians in substance use treatment programs. The book highlights use of one of the most sophisticated diagnostic instruments for application in dually diagnosed populations—the PRISM. The PRISM quotes *DSM-IV* criteria for twenty Axis I disorders and two Axis II disorders, and it includes interview questions that help clinicians to elicit information from

patients about their symptoms and to evaluate each symptom separately in terms of its relationship to substance abuse. For each psychiatric disorder, the PRISM provides a list of substances with intoxication or withdrawal symptoms that mimic the psychiatric disorder. The PRISM may be administered by interviewers with different professional backgrounds (e.g., degree in nursing, bachelor's degree in psychology) and typically requires approximately 120 minutes to administer. Hasin and colleagues began development of the PRISM in 1990 and have revised it several times in order to improve reliability and usability; studies have shown that the PRISM is reliable in making a *DSM-IV* diagnosis in research participants who have substance use disorders (Hasin et al., 1996). Although the PRISM, to date, has been used primarily in research settings, clinicians are encouraged to obtain the instrument and practice using it in order to become familiar with *DSM-IV* diagnostic criteria and the procedure for evaluating comorbid symptoms and syndromes. Information on the PRISM, including instructions on how to obtain copies of it, a review of its uses, and a copy of the *PRISM Training Manual*, is available at <http://www.columbia.edu/~dsh2/prism>. A computerized version of the PRISM is under development.

- *Differential Diagnosis and Overlapping Disorders*: This section briefly discusses the frequency with which the psychiatric disorder covered in the chapter co-occurs with other psychiatric disorders (e.g., panic disorder with major depression or bipolar disorder), medical problems, or substance use disorders.
- *Treatment Options*: This section provides a brief overview of options for treatment of the psychiatric disorder covered in the chapter and offers hints on how clinicians might tailor a treatment plan to simultaneously treat the psychiatric disorder and a substance use disorder, including suggestions on when to elicit the help of a mental health specialist or consultant. This section also discusses what response can be expected from treatment and how to tell if patients are responding well to treatment or are not responding.

## Chapters on Special Issues and Directions for Future Research

Chapters 13 through 20 are devoted to issues that are important for clinicians to consider in the management of substance-dependent patients with co-occurring psychiatric disorders, including nicotine dependence, common medical problems, adolescents and children, pain, suicide, and drug interactions. The last two chapters—Chapters 19 and 20—cover future directions for the field, including organization of treatment services and areas of further research.

## Self-Exam

A sixty-question Continuing Education and Clinical Skills Examination (CECSE) appears at the end of the book as a tool for assessing reading comprehension and the ability to apply and synthesize the information provided in the chapters. Questions were designed to query readers about clinically relevant aspects of diagnosis and treatment of co-occurring psychiatric and substance use disorders, not esoteric details or DSM trivia.

The CECSE consists of three multiple-choice questions for each chapter (Chapters 1 through 20) about information presented in the book. The sixty-question CECSE

was “test-piloted” on a group of resident physicians in training in the psychiatry residency program at St. Luke’s and Roosevelt Hospitals in New York City. The “correct answers” to questions reflect the editors’ collective recommendation rather than the definitive word on diagnosis and treatment. At least one question for each chapter includes a clinical vignette that is based upon a case from our clinical experiences and that tests the reader’s ability to apply the clinical skills discussed in the book. Questions assess competence in the following ten clinical areas:

1. *Epidemiology*—for example, which disorders commonly co-occur with post-traumatic stress disorder?
2. *Assessment*—for example, which questions are most likely to elicit an accurate answer when assessing a patient for anorexia nervosa?
3. *Psychiatric Symptoms*—for example, what are the vegetative symptoms of depression?
4. *Substance Abuse Symptoms*—for example, is there such a diagnosis as nicotine withdrawal?
5. *Medical Symptoms*—for example, can heroin intoxication or cocaine intoxication result in seizures?
6. *DSM-IV Terminology*—for example, is pathological gambling classified as an addiction, an impulse control disorder, a variant of obsessive compulsive disorder, or a mood disorder?
7. *Differential Diagnosis*—for example, how does one distinguish between substance-induced anxiety and social anxiety disorder (formerly called social phobia)?
8. *Pharmacotherapy*—for example, antipsychotic medications are best for the relief of (a) cognitive symptoms, (b) positive symptoms, or (c) negative symptoms of schizophrenia?
9. *Psychotherapy*—for example, what is the primary dialectic in Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) for borderline personality disorder?
10. *Twelve-Step Programs*—for example, what is the relationship between mutual help groups like Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and the use of psychiatric medications?

In order to permit readers to receive continuing education credits, an answer key to the CECSE has not been included with the book. Readers may obtain the answer key free of charge by contacting The Addiction Institute of New York by e-mail or snail mail:

The Addiction Institute of New York  
St. Luke’s and Roosevelt Hospitals  
Attention: CECSE  
1000 Tenth Avenue  
New York, New York 10019  
e-mail: [CECSE@AddictionInstituteNY.org](mailto:CECSE@AddictionInstituteNY.org)

The New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services and other national and state accreditation organizations that certify addiction counselors, rehabilitation counselors, and social workers will award continuing education credits for studying this textbook and successfully passing the CECSE (more information about obtaining continuing education credits can be found on the Web site of The Addiction Institute of New York: <http://www.AddictionInstituteNY.org/CECSE>). Readers who answer 75 percent of the questions correctly are eligible to receive free of charge a certificate of completion. To receive a certificate of completion (and a copy of the answer key) mail the answer sheet to The Addiction Institute of New York at the address listed above; note that only an original answer sheet (i.e., the sheet found in the back of this book, not a photocopy) can be accepted.

## **APPLICATION OF ACQUIRED SKILLS AND CONTINUED STUDY**

### **Benefits of Practice in Using Structured Diagnostic Interviews**

Study of the chapters included in this book should allow readers to improve their knowledge of psychiatric disorders and their treatment among substance-dependent patients. Since knowledge must be reinforced with practice, we encourage readers to obtain training in use of one of the standard semistructured psychiatric interviews, particularly the PRISM. Through the process of learning to use this instrument, readers will increase their familiarity with *DSM-IV* criteria and can become skilled in psychiatric evaluation.

### **Benefits of Clinical Practice**

Clinicians and treatment programs should take steps to expand the scope of their practice by learning to evaluate and provide treatment for dually diagnosed patients. This book may be used as a resource. Clinical skill improves with practice and is guided by supervision and feedback on one's clinical work. Clinicians and treatment programs should consider engaging a consultant who is an expert in diagnosis and treatment of dually diagnosed patients and who is willing to see specific patients with co-occurring disorders, provide guidance on diagnosis and treatment planning, participate in case conferences, or help to provide services to specific cases. Clinicians and treatment programs should also consider looking for opportunities to develop formal liaisons between substance abuse treatment services and psychiatric treatment services, to expand services, or to open new services that are tailored to the treatment needs of patients with co-occurring disorders. Through these services, substance abuse treatment staff members can work side-by-side with psychiatrists and psychologists, and staff members may learn from each other. Patients will benefit from these expanded efforts to address their problems with substance abuse and psychiatric disorders.



## *Authors' Note*

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