
Effects Of Alcoholism Addiction

Alcohol consumption is accepted by most people in our society. This is because of course it is legal, after the age of 21 here in the United States. More than half of the adults in the US consume alcohol. Alcohol is the most used psychoactive drug in the United States. It is becoming a norm for adults to eat their dinner every night with a cup of wine. There are many disagreements of whether alcoholism should be considered a disease. Maltzman stated some of the theories of the causes of alcoholism, they vary from genetic influences to personal choice (1). There are so many effects alcoholism has on the individual and most people are unaware. Although alcohol consumption is socially accepted, society is not aware of the effects of alcoholism.

Alcoholism is defined as “a compulsion to drink that leads to a breakdown in the victim’s ability to function” (Manzardo 33). Manzardo categorized the effects of alcoholism into three major groups: Psychological effects, Medical effects, and Social effects (35). Alcohol is made from ethanol. When ethanol enters the body, within minutes it is distributed throughout the body, through the bloodstream. The more the person drinks the higher the tolerance to alcohol. Tolerance can be defined as the either acute or chronic. Acute is easily developed, over the course of a couple hours of binge drinking. Chronic tolerance is defined by the ability to appear sober while having high levels of alcohol in the blood. Diamond and Messing stated that “Tolerance is caused by adaptive molecular changes in the brain” (280).

Some of the Psychological effects of alcoholism are self-deception, guilt, amnesia, anxiety and depression. Self-deception might be a little obvious to others except the person suffering from alcoholism. They are aware of the situation but cannot come to admit it is a problem. They believe that they are in control because they are the perpetrator not the victim of alcohol. Guilt is something they feel due to the constant reminders that they have a problem which they won't admit to. Many have reminders like the constant fights with their spouses, or the inability to be an overall functional adult in society. Amnesia is the most common effect in almost anyone who is over drinking. When someone suffers from alcoholism, they have temporary memory loss anytime they are drinking. They don't have the ability to drink moderately so instances of amnesia occur regularly. Anxiety and depression are almost always closely associated. It can almost be a trigger to drink and with a rewarding feeling. When you're feeling down, you drink and feel good due to endorphins being released, but then it wears off. Alcohol is technically a depressant, it impedes the function of the Central Nervous System. Alcoholism changes the chemistry in your brain making the individual more predisposed to suffering from anxiety and depression.

Medical effects of Alcoholism are many. Some of the organs that are affected by alcoholism are the heart, stomach, liver, pancreas, and the brain. Additionally, to that there is also nerve fibers being damaged, impotence, and Alcohol Withdrawal Syndrome. The heart becomes weak over time of being exposed to chronic drinking. Eventually, it impacts how oxygen and nutrients are delivered to the vital organs. In the stomach alcoholism affects it over time with the development of gastritis. Gastritis as defined by Manzardo as the inflammation of the stomach lining (39). Ulcers are connected to heavy drinking as well; they may develop for other reasons as well, but they are highly linked to alcoholism as well. The liver might be the most well-known organ to be

damaged due to high drinking. The liver is the organ responsible for breaking down alcohol and removing it from the blood. There are several diseases that affect the liver due to alcoholism, like Fatty Liver, Alcoholic Hepatitis, Cirrhosis and fibrosis. Fatty Liver, also known as Steatosis, is an accumulation of fat inside the liver cells. It affects a high amount of people suffering from alcoholism. Alcoholic Hepatitis is a little more complex because the illness is not always generated from alcoholism, it may occur to anyone. Alcoholic Hepatitis is the inflammation of the liver. Cirrhosis is when the individual becomes jaundiced. Inflammation of the liver cells occurs and causes them to eventually die out. Many of the effects of cirrhosis in men include breast growth, testes shrink, loss of baritone voice, loss of body and facial hair. The liver becomes smaller and unable to sustain life. Many of the liver issues from alcoholism lead to fibrosis of the liver, which is scarring. The Pancreas, which helps regulate blood sugar levels can also be affected by alcoholism. Manzardo stated that the “blood vessels around the Pancreas swell causing Pancreatitis” (39). Over time the individual is at risk for developing Diabetes type 2. Another essential organ affected by alcoholism is the Brain. There are two commonly known brain illness that occur due to chronic alcoholism. They aren't as common as some of the other organ illness. Wernicke's Encephalopathy and Korsakoffs Psychosis are illness' that affect the brain function. Wernicke's Encephalopathy is categorized by three major symptoms, ataxia, oculomotor abnormalities, and global confusion (Diamond and Messing 283). Ataxia is impaired balance and coordination. Oculomotor abnormalities is when the eye moves abnormally. Global confusion defined by the inability to pay attention, disorientation, and sleepiness. Wernicke's Encephalopathy is caused by a long-time deficiency of Thiamine, a Vitamin B. Many times, it is left untreated and if it is there is a 10% to 20% mortality rate (Diamond and Messing 283). Korsakoff's Psychosis goes hand in hand with Wernicke's Encephalopathy, it occurs to most patients that survive Wernicke's Encephalopathy. Korsakoff's Psychosis is an amnesic disorder. Retrograde amnesia for recent memories but the long-term memory remains unaffected. Many times, disorientation occurs, they are unable to keep up with time and place. Anterograde Amnesia occurs, which is when they are unable to learn any new information. Another medical effect of alcoholism is Alcoholic Cerebellar Degeneration, doesn't occur to all alcoholics, which is why many researchers suggest that it genetics play a role. Alcoholic Cerebellar Degeneration is characterized as Giat Ataxia, it is abnormal uncoordinated movements (Diamond and Messing 284). Alcoholic Dementia is one of the common side effects of the ethanol in the brain, it is due to loss if neurons and brain tissue. This primarily affects the frontal cortex of the brain. It may occur to anyone who is drinking more than they should, not only alcoholics. Central Pontine Myelinolysis (CPM) is uncommon and usually occurs to individuals going through Alcohol Withdrawal. The disorder is when there is a loss of myelin in the white matter of the cerebellum. Nerve fibers are damaged after a long exposure to alcoholism. Nerve fibers extend from the spinal cord to the muscles. They can degenerate and cause many of the illness' affecting coordination. It is not physically due to the alcohol, it is due to a vitamin deficiency (Manzardo 40). Manzardo stated that “Overall brain damage in alcoholics occurs when there is a high deficiency of Thiamine which is a type of Vitamin B” (41). This may be prevented if Thiamine supplements are given with time. Impotence is very common in alcoholics, although they still experience sexual desire their performance is impaired. The reason is that alcohol suppresses testosterone in men production in men and estrogen production in women. This is more prominent in people suffering from alcoholism for a long period of time. If this occurs during adolescence the effect can be more severe. It can irreversibly affect hormone regulation. Manzardo also stated that “some alcoholics not only have trouble with sexual performance when drinking, but the problem persists long into sobriety” (42). Alcohol Withdrawal Syndrome is a temporary condition that last from two days to a week. The symptoms vary according to the length of time the person suffered from alcoholism

and the amount they consumed regularly. The mildest symptoms are shakiness, a few hours after the last drink. The morning shakes occurs to everyone experiencing withdrawal. The hands start to shake throughout the day. Some individuals start to hallucinate. Some even have convulsions after one to three they stop drinking. The severe symptoms of withdrawal are when they experience delirium (Manzardo 43).

The Social effects of Alcoholism as explained by Iranpour and Nakhee “alcohol is a crucial risk factor for intentionally inflicted and unintentionally acquired injuries” (132). Alcoholism causes both emotional and physical problems on both the alcoholic and the society. There many affected by alcoholism “It has a huge impact on family life, employment, violence, and crime” (Korlakunta and Reddy 127). Many children of alcoholics grow up to have long term emotional problems. There are many failed marriages due to alcoholism. Overall, alcoholism affects innocent people when it comes to violence or accidents. Iranpour and Nakhee stated “According to a 2016 WHO report, interpersonal violence induced by alcohol consumption causes 90,000 deaths every year” (132). Suicide is highly associated with alcoholism. 1 out of 4 suicides in the US is an alcoholic (Manzardo 46). There are an estimated 20,000 automobile deaths a year that are alcohol related. This accounts for 40% of all traffic fatalities (Manzardo 46).

Although society deems drinking alcohol as normal. The country has to be educated on the full effects of alcoholism. Due to the nature of alcohol it is easily something that can become an addiction. Many innocent people, especially children are affected by alcoholism. The effects that alcohol has on the society are major and should be taken less lightly because it is a legal substance.