



A Service Line of:
SpecialCare Hospital
Management

“New Vision can Safely Treat Benzodiazepine Withdrawal”

-Scott Erickson, MD
Medical Director- New Vision

Clinical Newsletter- Quarter 2, 2019

Benzodiazepine Withdrawal Stabilization with the New Vision Service - Dr. Scott Erickson

Introduction to Benzodiazepine Stabilization

Since 1992, SpecialCare Hospital Management (SHM) has been a leader providing inpatient withdrawal management services for patients seeking to break the cycle of addiction. Offering protocols which promote individualized treatment, SHM has provided services to over 400,000 patients! One such service, is the treatment of benzodiazepine withdrawals.

Benzodiazepines

Benzodiazepines are a classification of drug with direct binding to the GABA neurotransmitter receptors, which are widely distributed throughout the brain. When a GABA agonist, such as Xanax, Ativan, Klonopin, or Librium is used, the



Benzodiazepines affect a receptor in the brain called the gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA-A) receptor.

chloride channels are opened, which results in decreased neuronal excitability. This decrease in excitability results in decreased anxiety, increased sedation, relaxation, and an increased seizure threshold. When taken routinely and habitually, physical dependence may occur. This physical dependence is an altered homeostasis and therefore, discontinuation of the drug will result in symptoms of withdrawal (Cluver, 2015).

Withdrawal from Benzodiazepines

Research suggests that withdrawal symptoms are seen in patients who are physiologically dependent and abruptly discontinue their use or do not meet their tolerable levels (Cluver, 2015). Benzodiazepines, which present withdrawal symptoms much like alcohol, have an onset of about 12-24 hours following cessation, reaching a peak intensity between 1 and 3 days (Cluver, 2015). Since the nature of benzodiazepine withdrawal involves key neurotransmitters, unmanaged withdrawal can be fatal.

Management during Withdrawal

Considering the urgent nature of the withdrawal process, patients are recommended to taper over a period of several weeks to prevent neurological decompensation (Cluver et al., 2015). Recommended standards include the use of a tapered medication (benzodiazepine or barbiturate) over a period of several weeks. Additionally, the use of an anticonvulsant is coupled to prevent further neurological complications, including seizure.

New Vision™ Can Help

New Vision provides a medically managed taper which provides individuals seeking services the opportunity to withdrawal in a safe and dignified environment. Individuals will be inducted on to a medication taper, typically Librium or Phenobarbital, and decreased over 3 days. Aftercare will then be coordinated for outpatient follow-up and additional tapering of the medication over several weeks. Under the New Vision service, patients undergoing treatment for benzodiazepine withdrawal can maintain their current opioid maintenance plan.

SpecialCare Hospital Management administers this service for the hospital and has a financial interest in this service. The diagnosis of need for inpatient admission can only be made by a licensed physician.

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Substance Use Dreams: Reminiscent of Relapse?

-M. Walters, RN

Introduction

The meaning behind dreams bares deep ties to history in culture and civilization. Freud described dreaming as the “royal road to the unconscious,”(Freud, 1913) which provides liberating and possible curative insights that are obscured by psychological defenses during alertness(Kelly, 2019). In recovery, there is little representation or explanation of the phenomena of substance use dreams, and little science to support claims of their relevance to recovery.



Those who have reported vivid dreams of substance use often portray intense relapse, with deep disbelief that the relapse occurred.

Upon awakening, fear, remorse, and guilt are experienced followed by relief from realization of the experience only being a dream.

Dreaming and Processing

Scientific research suggests that most dreams occur during rapid-eye movement sleep (REM), which is the deepest stage of sleep. Since dreams are the product of limbic system and prefrontal brain regions, one can conclude that dreams are a process of memory consolidation, organization, and processing of emotions.

Research suggests that substance use involves a high amount of limbic involvement; thus, substance use in dreams is to be expected after both pleasurable and traumatic association of events.

Research Findings

In a 2019 article published by *The Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*, J.F Kelly and M. Claire Greene evaluated dream activity of 25,229 criteria-eligible participants, in recovery, who responded to screening questions. Participants, further categorized by demographics, were asked several questions about drinking or substance use history and dreams. Of the 25,229 responses, 2,002 participants were eligible for inclusion in the report analysis. Roughly 10% reported having a dream so long ago, they couldn't remember. 3.9% reported dreams more than 2 years before, 4.5% reported dreams one to two years before, 3.6% reported dreams six to twelve months before, and 2.2% reported dreams in the past three months.

Conclusion

Individuals reported more frequent substance use dreams which were more vivid during the first one to two years of sobriety and less common as individuals approached ten years of sobriety. Therefore, it is plausible that during addiction recovery, memory coding and reorganization, during REM sleep, may reflect a process of psychobiological deconditioning whereby the previous behaviors and automated processes involved in alcohol and drug use begin to be recoded and organized. This negative emotional intensity that is represented in reports of relapse in dreams, gradually serves to deepen the disassociation between alcohol and substance use and functioning.

Interested in learning more about New Vision™?

Contact Matthew Walters, Director of Clinical Services to schedule an introductory call.

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Hometown Honors



Allen Parish Hospital

Kinder, LA

-Teri Reeves, RN

Region 1- AL, FL, GA, LA, MS, TX



Teri was nominated by New Vision™ staff at Allen Parish hospital for her leadership qualities and ability to provide positive influence on patients admitted for services.

Service Coordinator, Angela Handy, said “Teri’s ability to guide and coach patients is

superb!” Teri is being recognized for promoting a positive perspective to patients at their turning point towards recovery. Teri has been a nurse at Allen Parish hospital for nearly 3 years and enjoys caring for New Vision patients, saying she enjoys “seeing their eyes fill with a glimpse of hope and begin to smile again.” Teri continues to empower patients by providing encouragement, support, and compassion! Angela and Tiffany would like to tell Teri “we thank you for providing quality treatment and we recognize you for always being willing to step in and provide support!”

Wood County Hospital

Bowling Green, OH

-Jonathan Burt, RN

Region 3- KY, NJ, OH, OK, UT, VA

Jonathan has been a nurse at Wood County Hospital in Bowling Green Ohio for 2 years. Nominated for his willingness to help and investment in patient care, Jonathan is recognized by the New Vision Team for going above-and-beyond. “He is a selfless person who was born to be a nurse and always gives 110% of himself” says Service Coordinator, Molly Whelan, adding “Jonathan is invested in ensuring patient safety, comfort, and wellbeing is met, regardless of their severity.” “I see such a need for this service, and it allows me an opportunity to serve the community in a way that takes away stigma... it is highly rewarding,” says Jonathan referencing his empowerment-“I am their champion!”

Missouri Baptist Hospital

Sullivan, MO

-Heather Sluis MSN, RN

Region 2- AR, IL, MO

Heather was nominated by New Vision™ staff at the Sullivan campus for caring, supportive, and compassionate care of patients. Service Coordinator, Terisha Friedman said “Heather



IC- Holly Todaro; Nurse: Heather Sluis; SC- Terisha Friedman

always goes above and beyond to assist in any way she can.” Heather is recognized for her dedication to “whatever it takes” to help

New Vision patients, whether it be quickly coordinating a bed for admission or meeting with the patients to discuss their care. Heather has been a nurse at Missouri Baptist- Sullivan for 10 years and says she “enjoys helping people through the roughest periods of their lives.” Heather believes her work is rewarding and continues to empower patients to be successful by providing encouragement and support. New Vision at Missouri Baptist would like to thank Heather “for always going above and beyond”



Nurse- Jonathan Burt; SC- Molly Whelan