

Preface

It has been 21 years since we published *Alcoholism and Substance Abuse in Special Populations*, the first edition of this book. We have learned a great deal during that time in our clinical and academic work. And, a lot has changed in the field of addictions, including the terminology we use. Today, *diverse populations* more accurately describes the populations represented here. For who is to say who is “special”? The word *diversity* both captures the social reality of our world and celebrates the myriad differences among us. Yet it is very difficult to accurately define *diverse population*. Perhaps that is one reason we have taken so long to publish a second book on the topic. There are benefits to having a spouse working in the same field as you do. One of those is that you can easily share experiences and ideas on a daily basis. We have spent a great deal of time in our lives discussing various clinical issues, including the difficulties involved in categorizing people who have substance abuse problems. For example, if you are a woman, you could also be a Black woman or a Native American woman. You could at the same time be a professional athlete or a doctor or a child of an alcoholic. Which of those categories is most important with regard to substance abuse prevention or treatment? This new book examines the issues involved in the etiology, treatment, and prevention of alcoholism and other types of substance abuse among specific populations. It is important to recognize that each chapter attempts to be discrete and point primarily to the issues involved in a specific population. However, any single substance-abusing client might have issues that are addressed in more than one chapter. And, some populations have a great deal in common with each other, for example, adolescents and those who are elderly. First, both are often involved in major life-changing events. Adolescents are leaving school and going into a completely new environment, perhaps to a new location far from home. Elderly people are retiring from work, often moving to a new location. Both groups are faced with the challenge of adapting to changing hormones. Such life experiences can be stressful.

The populations represented in this book were chosen either because of their high risk for substance abuse problems in relation to the general population, as with Native Americans and adolescents, or because of a lack of resources available to provide up-to-date, appropriate information, as in the chapter on those who resist 12-step treatment and the chapter on individuals with disabilities. Chapter 13, “A Systems Treatment for the Impaired Physician Family,” both examines the risk factors associated with physicians and offers a systems approach to treatment that is applicable to any population. This approach, which views addiction as rooted in multigenerational family processes, best represents our personal view.

Each of the contributors is uniquely suited to address the specific population discussed. In most cases, the contributors have had personal experience working with their specific populations in clinical settings. In several cases, the contributors are members of the population they are writing about, giving them special insight into the issues involved. The reader may choose to use the book to research a specific population; however, we feel that the book will be most beneficial to those working in the field of substance abuse if they read it in its entirety. As in the first edition of the book, each contributor has carefully reviewed the existing literature on a specific population in order to include the most current and useful substance abuse information regarding that population. The amount of literature available varies considerably across populations; each author has made a concerted effort to provide the most complete and up-to-date information possible. In addition, each chapter contains a reference list, which gives the reader a means of pursuing further reading in any given area. Of particular interest are the many Web sites and electronic documents provided in these pages. There seems to be almost no limit to the useful information you can find on the Web. Unfortunately, there is also no limit to the misleading, useless information available on the Web. We have attempted to help the reader by providing reliable sites. In addition to the reference lists, most of the chapters include a section entitled “Resources,” which lists useful organizations and their contact information.

Although the contributors were given latitude to write their chapters as they saw fit, they were each provided with a brief outline to follow. Therefore, most chapters have the same structure. For example, most chapters begin with a review of demographic information, substance abuse rates, and kinds of substances abused by the specific population.

The underlying approach to the etiology, treatment, and prevention of substance abuse is likewise consistent across chapters. The majority of the contributors have had close professional contact with us and share similar beliefs. They are likely to believe that alcoholism and other types of substance abuse are multifaceted problems that should be examined from physical, social, and psychological perspectives. They are further likely to believe that the family—both the family of origin and the nuclear family—plays a major role in the cause, or etiology, of substance abuse and that treatment and prevention efforts are best undertaken with the family fully involved. As the editors of this volume, we feel that the message regarding the role of the family is an important one and cannot be overstated.

Although there have been enormous strides in knowledge and attitudes regarding substance abuse, we are just beginning to comprehend the significance of substance abuse problems with regard to our society and our world. Substance abuse problems are emerging as major political and economic issues, offering many challenges for those working in the field. It becomes ever more important that we learn from, yet not be bound by, our past. We must understand and use the information provided by research and clinical experience to guide us in planning programs to prevent and treat substance abuse. The significant progress made over the past 60 years in identifying and understanding substance abuse has not been equaled in the areas of treatment and

prevention. It is time, we believe, to develop programs designed for specific populations that can be proven over time to be effective in reducing or even eliminating these most pressing of problems involving addiction and abuse. We hope this book will be a step in that direction.

Gary W. Lawson

Ann W. Lawson

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