

Name:

Name of Institution:

Introduction

Research has shown that people tend to abuse substances such as tobacco, alcohol and other substances for reasons that are varied (Maltzman, 2008). However, our societies have been found to contribute to this behavior in one way or the other because people are socialized in their families and tend to acquire their behaviors from there. Many incidences that are reported in most hospitals have a direct link to physical trauma that affects the health of those who tend to exhibit such behaviors (Ronald, 2001). Tallies made in jails and prisons indicate that indeed there is a connection between the level of drug dependence and crimes that are committed by those who are sentenced there. As a unit of society, the family can be termed as an important institution that can be a source of vast information about drugs and substance abuse (Sullivan, 2010). The main purpose of this paper is to present findings of an interview carried with several people to establish the significance of substance abuse in my family.

Substance abuse history and other mental health issues in the family

The history of the family has been characterized by incidences of substance misuse within it. To begin with, the late great grandfather is said to have been highly addicted to alcohol since the time he was the age of fourteen years old. In terms of how steady he was in terms of mental functioning, the great grandfather was much steady when not drunk but was destabilized with old age and addiction to alcohol. The great grandmother of the family never indulged in alcoholic activities and was very much steady throughout her life. They successfully gave birth to five children of which four were male and one was female.

Among the four grandparents in the family, three of them were alcoholics while one of them who also happen to be my grandparent never took alcohol although he suffered brain degeneration at an earlier stage. His wife was mentally stable and managed to give birth to four

children two of whom were male and two females. My father is therefore from this lineage but he happens to be an alcoholic although not mentally challenged. The focus of the family over years has been to find a lasting solution to the problems that are affecting the family, alcoholism being one of them. The effects of a history of alcoholism are evident in the family whereby the family continues to face various complications that are as a result of addiction to alcohol such as ulcers. My mother on the other hand is mentally steady and does not indulge in any form of alcoholism. In addition, we are five siblings and various complications that are thought to be as a result of alcoholism are evident in the family.

Themes evident through the interviews

Throughout the interview, there are various themes that came out clearly. These are factors that seem to have contributed highly to the problems of substance that is experienced currently in the family. Major themes that came out during the interview include:

a. Genetic influences

Genetic makeup seems to have a deep impact on the problem of alcoholism in the family. This is because of the evidence given that beginning with the great grandfather, the alcoholic syndrome dominated the family and has run through various generations up to the current one. The pattern observed throughout the family indicates that there are some cases where the gene might have been dominant at the beginning and was later suppressed in my grandfather or was recessive and then re emerged and dominated my father.

b. Family dynamics

The kind of lifestyle that the family has led from the past was one that was full of several challenges such as conflicts and access to material property that made it hard for the

family to move on well. As a result of buildup of stress in the family, alcohol might have been resulted to as the only option in the process of relieving stress.

c. Social factors

The family is an important institution for socialization and therefore combines all the social forces. The family experienced several problems including the effect from culture. The ideology that alcohol is meant for men or true gentlemen should be discarded. Alcoholism has affected the family and thus the present day problem of addiction. In addition, the social setting in which the family is placed in increases accessibility to alcohol and therefore the present overconsumption.

Other social factors are cultural believes that alcohol is part and parcel of human life and should therefore be taken without any form of control. This was found to affect the kind of thinking that is postulated by members of the family and therefore influencing the consumption behavior of people in this region The end product is that the family is also swayed in the process and therefore forced to imitate what is readily observable in the social environment.

Intergenerational issues

In the interview, it was noted that the problem of alcoholism has been running from one generation to the other in this family. Therefore, it means that from the past, the problem has been transmitted from one generation to the other as a result of observational learning. Though with so many effects, this side might not have been exposed to the members of the family thus creating little concern in the family.

Attempted treatment

As a result of addiction to alcohol, there are various instances where attempts were made to assist my father to recover from the addiction. In early times in his youthful years, before he had begun much overconsumption of alcohol, a rehabilitation attempt was made and since then, four attempts have been made to assist him recover from the addiction.

Results/impact of the treatment

The treatment attempts made earlier did not succeed because they were aimed at rehabilitating but the extent at which the problem of addiction had gone was not successfully addressed. Although the treatment lowered the level of intake and the drinking pattern was re addressed, the real problem had not been addressed and therefore much intervention is required. Any intervention that will ensure that there is no dependence on alcohol on his part will be of benefit.

Events that impacted the problem

Despite signs that the problem might be running through the family, the problem of alcoholism in the family on the part of the father was triggered by peer pressure at the time when he was growing up. He was brought up in a setting where the parenting style was a permissive one. As a result of influence from those who were around him, he slowly but surely began indulging in drinking activities. It took some time before he was completely addicted to alcohol up to the present day condition where he cannot do without alcohol.

Mental health risks for current and future generations

One of the major effects of alcohol to both generations is the risk of brain damage, nausea and too much anxiety. The current problem being experienced is the alcoholism dependence syndrome whereby the use of alcohol has gained a complete incorporation into the inner cycle of one's life. The brains of young children are particularly vulnerable in this case because of their rate of development. Any effect that results from alcoholism may cause damage that may lead to memory distortion thus making learning to be difficult.

Alcoholism also exposes the current and future generation to risks of cancer of mouth and throat. Research has shown this may be carried on from one generation to the other and thus affecting the whole lineage with new infections. Due to too much alcohol, cirrhosis of the liver may also be translated to cancer of the liver for people who continue to indulge in the same behaviors and keep abusing the same substance. Over indulgence in alcoholism can also lead to stomach ulcers and internal bleeding in the process and therefore creating a lee way for other diseases.

Alcoholism is also characterized with low sex drive in men and cases of infertility while the same has an effect on women especially during pregnancy. The future generation might suffer the fetal alcoholic syndrome and other congenital defects that could otherwise have been prevented earlier. As a result of alcoholism also, the ability of bones to absorb enough calcium is hindered and therefore cases of weakness in terms of performance may later be reported in the family.

Professional assessment

There are a number of causes of alcoholism that requires much attention for them to be realized. A proper understanding of the cause of alcoholism is the first step in

acquiring an insight on how to take measures to assist the victims. In this case, the following can be termed as some of the major cause of the behavior observed in the said parent.

a. Genetic causes

Research has shown that alcoholism is one of the major hereditary characteristics that are passed on from parents to their children. The parent might therefore have been genetically predisposed to alcoholism as observed in his family history with alcohol.

b. Personality traits

The parent is that curious type because as he walked with his fellow peers, he got attracted to alcohol and wanted to know much about. As a result of the curiosity, he decided to get involved too much and that has resulted into the current problem.

c. Social factors and peer pressure

Several factors such as the social make up and the kind of people who surrounded the parent immensely contributed to his slow addiction to alcohol.

The only solution that can be used to assist the parent in this case is therefore operant conditioning whereby alcohol can be paired with an aversive stimulus that can assist in reducing the level of addiction. The reasoning behind this is that the patient will associate the alcohol with the stimuli and therefore make him become less interested in it.

Summary

There are several factors that contributed to the addiction that is observed in this family. The effects of alcoholism on the current and generations to follow in this case

cannot be neglected because they are adverse. The only treatment for such a problem can be through operant conditioning together with proper medication.

References

Maltzman, I., (2008), *Alcoholism: Its treatment and Mistreatment*, New York: MAC Inc.

Ronald, M., (2001), *Alcoholism, Genetics and social response*, Chicago: Tribune.

Sullivan, P., (2010), *Alcoholism, A chapter in pathology*, Maryland: McGraw