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Alcoholism Alcoholism is one of the biggest medical problems in the Western world. Alcohol has been around since biblical times. The problem continues to grow every year and has a negative impact on society. Nearly every town and city has restaurants that serve alcohol, and has stores where it can be purchased. For these reasons, the nature of alcoholism needs to be exposed. The problems that arise from this disease need to be shown. The purpose of this paper is to talk about the problem, the cause and effects, and the treatment process.

Alcoholism is the habitual or compulsive consumption of alcoholic liquor to excess according to Webster's New World Dictionary. An alcoholic has no control over drinking and continues to use alcohol even though adverse consequences occur (Hurley 71). Alcohol affects the alcoholic's family and work, they ignore responsibilities and assignments. In nineteen fifty six alcoholism was recognized as a disease by the American Medical Association. Fishman 28) When the National Council for Education on Alcoholism (now known as the National Council on Alcohol and Drug Dependency) was formed, their first and most prominent principle was, "Alcoholism is a disease" (Nicolaus 136). The disease has serious consequences on the drinker and society as well. Even though there is much concern about drugs, next to tobacco, alcohol is the most widely used drug in the United States (Hurley 71). Alcohol impaired drivers caused thirty two percent of traffic related fatalities in two thousand eight ("Alcohol Impaired Driving").

In 1996 nearly thirty six percent of incarcerated criminals were under the influence of alcohol when committing their crime ("Alcohol and Crime").

Indeed, alcoholism has become a public concern, since it had begun to influence society as well. There are two types of alcoholism, alcohol abuse and alcohol dependency. An example of alcohol abuse is random binge drinking. A person is alcohol dependent when that person can't stop drinking without withdrawal symptoms. " There is no known cause of alcoholism. " (Van Voorhees) Alcoholism is described as a drug addiction.

There are several factors that play in its development. They are divided into two main groups, psychological and social. Psychological factors include anxiety relief, conflict in relationships, depression and low self-esteem. Some examples of social factors are the ease of getting alcohol, peer pressure, social acceptance of alcohol use, and a stressful lifestyle. (Van Voorhees) There are other factors that lead to excessive drinking. " Research suggests that certain genes may increase the risk of alcoholism, but which genes or how they work is not known. (Van Voorhees) Studies have shown that family history is a factor as well. People whose parents abused alcohol have a higher risk of alcoholism. It is a given that alcoholism leads to physical and mental problems. But how does excessive consumption of alcohol affect the daily life of alcoholics? What are the effects of alcoholism in everyday life? The organ most sensitive to alcohol is the brain. The cerebrum is affected first. It is in control of sensation, perception, speech, and judgment. The cerebellum is the second part of the brain affected.

The cerebellum is responsible for coordination and balance. A person under the influence of alcohol will have slurred speech, loss of balance and uncoordinated movements. The excessive alcohol user is usually unable to

judge accurately what he or she can or cannot do. Drinking alcohol increases confidence and diminishes abilities. This misplaced confidence often leads people to judge themselves competent to perform tasks that are beyond their abilities. (Fishman 37-41) An alcoholic's job and family are also affected by alcoholism.

In couples it affects communication, which in turn, increases conflict levels. It has also been proven that domestic violence increases in alcoholic families. Alcohol use affects parenting. Family life can become chaotic and have poor quality environment. The children are exposed to the parent's increased conflict ("Alcohol and the Family"). An alcoholic's attendance to work is affected by drinking. They are chronically late and their productivity is decreased. The effects of alcohol in everyday life can be further explained through specific examples.

In terms of finances, an alcoholic would be irresponsible. The bills would not be paid on time, prompting the collection agencies to take action. An alcoholic would not be stable enough to manage his or her own money; thus, incapacity for money management is an effect of alcoholism in everyday life. In terms of employment or schooling, an alcoholic is most likely to be tardy. However, the person can altogether skip school or work to drink. Even socializing with friends is affected by alcoholism. An alcoholic usually does not like it when other people offer their opinion about his or her drinking habits.

He or she is irritated by comments and critiques of their drinking. As a result, the alcoholic would soon drink in secrecy. Another effect of alcoholism in

everyday life is the lapses in memory and interest. Due to the aforementioned effect on the brain, it follows that even memory is not spared from the dangers of alcohol. Alcoholics usually suffer from “blackouts” (Fishman 40). These are instances when they could not remember appointments and the like. Moreover, the activities that the person used to enjoy would cease to be enjoyable, due to the effect of alcoholism (Fishman 42).

These are some of the examples of how alcoholism affects everyday life. Alcoholism is a treatable disease. There are treatments available for this condition, and several medications have made it possible for alcoholics to fully recover. In the treatment of alcoholism, there are several steps to take into account: intervention, detoxification and rehabilitation (Fishman 60). The first step is intervention. It takes someone else to point out the problem for them to realize that they need to get help. The most familiar approach in intervention is the confrontation between alcoholics and the concerned party.

It was only recently when studies have shown that intervention would be more effective if it was done with “compassion and empathy” (Medline). The next step is detoxification. The objective of this step is to stop the drinking of alcoholic beverages. This phase in the treatment is tough for the alcoholic, as the intake of alcohol will suddenly be stopped. That is why detoxification usually takes place in an inpatient set-up, in which the environment is “controlled and supervised” (Van Voorhees). During the process, every medication is cautiously measured to hinder withdrawal from taking place.

The moment the symptoms of withdrawal are absent, the giving of medications would be gradually stopped. The duration of detoxification usually lasts from four to seven days. These days, there is a kind of detoxification that is in the outpatient set-up, but still under the guidance of a physician. While in detoxification treatment, it is important that the patient has a balanced diet, as well as vitamin supplements. This is because there are complications that happen with alcohol withdrawal, and the patient must be as healthy as possible (Fishman 83-84).

If the detoxification process stops people from consuming alcohol, the rehabilitation process guides people to fully recover by staying away from alcohol (Van Voorhees). This fourth step in the treatment is more comprehensive, as it prepares the patient for complete recovery in the long run. Not only does rehabilitation stop people from drinking, it allows them to create a network of support to encourage their continuous road to recovery. Rehabilitation programs usually involve “counseling, psychological support, therapy, education and skills training” (Fishman 85-88).

There are two kinds of rehabilitation programs: the short-term and the long-term programs (Fishman 89). The former requires less than a month, while the latter could range from a month to a year or longer. There is also the outpatient counseling option, which is suitable for those who have just finished an inpatient treatment. Aside from this, there are the support groups dedicated to the endeavor of recovery of alcoholics. Examples of which include SMART Recovery, Women for Sobriety, and Alcoholics Anonymous (Van Voorhees).

There are three recognized medications in treating alcoholism. The first one is Disulfiram. The medicine works by disrupting the metabolism of alcohol, causing a metabolite that would make the person sick if he drinks even a small amount of alcohol about two weeks after taking the medicine. The second drug is Acamprosate. It is believed that this drug helps people to abstain from alcohol; it also decreases the symptoms that come with abstinence ("Alcoholism"). The third drug is Naltrexone, which works on the brain to decrease alcohol cravings (Barbour 145-146).

It is crucial that people are made aware of the causes, effects and treatments of alcoholism. This awareness would help prevent the problem of alcoholism. People should be reminded that alcoholism is not just the problem of an individual but also of society. Works Cited Alcohol and the Family. Aug 2004. National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, Web. 15 Dec 2009. . Barbour, Scott. Alcohol. San Diego: Greenhaven Pr, 1998. 145-146. Print. Fishman, Ross. Alcohol and alcoholism. New York, NY: Chelsea House Pub, 1986. Print Hurley, Jennifer. Addiction. San Diego: Greenhaven Pr, 2000.

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