Ann Arbor Michigan Women Get Less Help for Alcohol Abuse despite Growing Rates of Excessive Drinking, Studies Suggest

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Women in Ann Arbor Michigan like the rest of the country are drinking at historically high rates, however, they are less likely to access treatment compared to men.

Cirrhosis is a severe liver disease that is considered one of the most extreme complications of alcoholism. There is currently no known cure for it, but patients with the disease can still improve their prognosis if they stop drinking. However, women with cirrhosis are not receiving substance abuse treatment to help them recover from alcoholism.

There are studies that suggest that people with cirrhosis, especially women, are not receiving treatment even if their insurance plan offers coverage for addiction disorders.

According to the Research Society on Alcoholism, most Ann Arbor patients don?t receive medications known to help with drinking disorders, even if they are privately insured, and even if the drug is known to help ensure their cirrhosis doesn?t worsen.

?The study confirms what anyone who is in the practice of managing patients with liver disease already knows ? that while alcohol cessation treatment programs can improve outcomes, very few patients avail themselves to it,? said Dr. Robert Brown, a hepatologist and director of the Center for Liver Disease and Transplantation at New York-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center.

The gender of patients made a difference in how likely they were to receive treatment. Researchers found that women with alcohol-associated cirrhosis were less likely to receive any type of substance abuse treatment than men.

The findings on gender disparity and substance abuse treatment suggest that the societal and social challenges impacting women are discouraging them from seeking treatment.

?Women face additional barriers to treatment for substance abuse. They have family pressure not to admit they have a disorder or seek treatment, they generally have less financial freedom, and they tend to have more childcare responsibilities than men, making it harder to get treatment,? said Deni Carise, PhD, a clinical psychologist with expertise in addiction, and chief scientific officer at Recovery Centers of America, which offers treatment for drug and alcohol addiction.

Women?s drinking habits in Michigan have changed significantly over time. A 2017 report published in the journal JAMA Psychiatry found that high-risk drinking climbed by almost 60 percent for women from 2001-2002 to 2012-2013.

Researchers also defined high-risk drinking for women as having four or more drinks at least one day per week in the span of 12 months.

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism states that women may be more vulnerable to the adverse health effects of drinking compared to men.

?Women can develop cirrhosis with less alcohol and in a shorter time frame. The hypothesis is that certain hormones make women more susceptible, though we don?t know exactly why they are so much more susceptible,? said Dr. Jessica Mellinger, lead author of the Research Society on Alcoholism study and a Michigan Medicine hepatologist.

It is also worth noting that alcoholism has historically been considered a disease that primarily affects men. This means that women may be slipping through the cracks in getting a diagnosis. This means they are also not getting the treatment they need to get better.

Carise and Brown agreed that improving diagnostic tools and encouraging doctors to ask all patients about substance use habits can help women become more aware of potential addiction problems.

Carise adds: ?There are subgroups of women, such as those with certain mental health disorders or a history of trauma, who are much more likely to benefit from gender-specific treatment, and some women will only go for treatment if it?s separate from men.?

If someone in the family is struggling with opioid addiction, it is important to seek help. A combination of medical detox and behavioral therapy can go a long way in the fight against drug abuse. But because every individual is affected by addiction differently, a comprehensive program tailored to their specific needs is necessary. Look for a nearby addiction treatment facility in Ann Arbor today and find out how drug treatment programs work.

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