

Stimulant Withdrawal Assessment: ED Huddle Education Tool

Case Study

A patient has been triaged and is in the waiting room. They come to the triage nurse reporting feelings of anxiety and requesting to see a doctor. The nurse notes they have a down cast tone and asks to lie down because they are feeling so tired.

1. What can assist in your assessment of the patient?
2. How do you identify patient's symptoms?
3. What would your next evidence-based treatment be for this patient?

Answer

1. What can assist in your assessment of the patient?

- **Screen for substance use** to understand the patient's relationship with substances.
- **Self-report from the patient:** there can be lots of subjective symptoms prior to objective signs. Has there been previous episodes of withdrawal? If so, how have they been like?
- **Ask when they had last used?** Acute withdrawal typically starts within 24hr of last use and can last for 3-5 days

2. Identify Symptoms: patient is experiencing stimulant withdrawal- anxiety, low mood and fatigue

[Other possible symptoms of stimulant withdrawal: Fatigue • Pain • Hypersomnia • Insomnia • Depressed mood • Vivid, unpleasant dreams • Anxiety • Craving • Psychomotor agitation or impairment • Increased appetite • Cognitive impairment • Agitation and irritability • Self-stigmatizing thoughts]

3. Next Steps: What evidence-based treatment should you provide?

- Comfort and supportive care: minimizing stimuli, concise and repeated communication, adequate nutrition (vitamins, fluids, and nutritional support, including thiamine and dextrose), supporting sleep hygiene, mental health assessment
- Identify their goals and the supports that would help them achieve them.
- Consult social work or your facilities addiction consult service for referral to psychosocial interventions
 - e.g. counselling, cognitive behavioural therapy, or contingency management.
- Provide resources: THN Kits, Lifeguard App and Drug Checking Resources.

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Resources

SHOP BCCSU/VCH Hospital Care Substance Use Guidelines



Substance Use Consult Service

24/7 Addiction Medicine Clinician Support Line

BCCSU Clinical Resources:

Acute Clinical Care Guidance

Stimulant Use Disorder Practice Update