Detoxification: as Aspect of Treatment Encyclopedia Article

Detoxification: as Aspect of Treatment

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Detoxification: as Aspect of Treatment

Detoxification is the term commonly used to describe the process or set of procedures involved in readjusting a drug-or alcohol-dependent person to a lower or absent tissue level of the substance (drug) of dependence. With chronic (long-term) use of many drugs, there is adaptation within the nervous system. Readaptation of the nervous system to the absence of a particular substance can cause a WITHDRAWAL syndrome (as a manifestation of PHYSICAL DEPENDENCE). The patient would reasonably be expected to have symptoms (what they tell the health-care provider) and exhibit signs (what the observer sees) of a withdrawal syndrome.

The detoxification process usually occurs in a supportive environment, which might be a hospital or clinic, but not always; it might also involve the use of medications (other drugs) in order to control or suppress symptoms and signs of withdrawal, but not always. The level of care and the use of medications depends on the substance of abuse and the level of physical dependence (severity of withdrawal syndrome), complications, or potential for complications. The more severe complications are seen most frequently in association with alcohol or sedative-hypnotic withdrawal. The goal of detoxification is to provide a safe and comfortable transition to a drug-free state. Detoxification is generally the first step in the process of treatment for rehabilitation.

See Also

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