What is Inpatient and Outpatient Addiction Treatment?

By The Professionals At Robert Alexander Center

Addiction is a severe, debilitating, and often misunderstood illness that is believed to affect almost 21 million sufferers in America alone. It also impacts the lives of the friends and loved ones of sufferers. When untreated, addiction can lead to early death. However, only an estimated 10% of sufferers receive treatment.

What Is Substance Addiction?

Addiction is the most severe level of a substance use disorder. It is considered a disease, not a personal failing of the sufferer, and so can be treated as such. When someone suffers from an addiction, they are unable to control the use of a substance, whether it's drugs or alcohol.

Some of these substances, such as alcohol, tobacco, and prescription medication, are legal. Others are illegal, although all addictions affect a person's brain and behavior and can be dangerous. The rate and severity of addiction can vary depending on the substance. For example, opioids are notoriously addictive.

Without treatment, a sufferer will likely continue to spiral further into their addiction. The abuse of substances can result in long-term health problems, loss of income, breakdowns of relationships, and potentially even death.

It can be incredibly difficult for someone to break their addiction, especially without help. Someone who suffers from substance addiction may need treatment and support from friends, family, and medical professionals to overcome their illness and to stay substance-free.

The First Step of Addiction Treatment

The first step of recovering from an addiction is recognizing that there's a problem. This step may be triggered by something known as a "crisis event," where the sufferer is forced to realize the severity of their addiction.

Typically, this is a painful realization. It can occur after an overdose or other life-threatening consequence of the addiction. Or, it can happen when the addiction affects their life in another way, such as the sufferer losing a job or a partner.

This can be a difficult hurdle to overcome, but it's what causes many people to start their much-needed treatment.

What is Detoxification?

Once someone seeks treatment for their addiction, they will first undergo detoxification. As the name suggests, detoxification, or detox, is the process of ridding the body of toxins. The body metabolizes whatever substances remain and it can start on a clean slate.

The process of detoxification can differ depending on the addiction. Certain addictions may require a medically assisted detox, where medication is used to relieve the withdrawal symptoms. Medication can also reduce cravings, making it easier to go without the substance.

Once a patient has been detoxed, they can move on to the next phase of treatment.

What is Inpatient and Outpatient Addiction Treatment?

Every person is unique, which means that care plans will differ between cases. Some people will spend little to no time in an inpatient facility and can skip to an outpatient program, while others will require the structure and environment it provides. If you are seeking treatment, then be assured that it will be catered to your needs.

Inpatient care is a type of program where the patient lives within the facility. This allows them to be closely monitored and provides a safe environment to focus on overcoming your addiction. The primary treatment offered is individual and group therapy, which provides people with the tools to cope outside of the facility.

Drug treatment programs may also be implemented, depending on the patient and their circumstances. The person should be able to recover physically, while the mental aspects of addiction are also treated.

Some people may have residential inpatient treatment, which has a homier environment. This kind of inpatient care is less rigid and offers more freedom, as it acts as a transitional period between inpatient and outpatient care.

At a certain point, or if the case isn't severe enough to necessitate inpatient treatment, a patient can move onto an intensive outpatient program. This allows them to return to their normal routine, while still focusing on rehabilitation and recovery. Intensive outpatient care involves regular weekday meetings, regular monitoring of substance use, and scheduled therapy sessions.

There is also an outpatient program that is less involved, although it still offers regular therapy on a set schedule. It's helpful to have a supportive environment at home and requires dedication to keep up. You may still receive medication to help your recovery if needed. The idea is for people to move on from their addiction and to be able to understand the disorder so that they can identify risk factors that can lead them to relapse.

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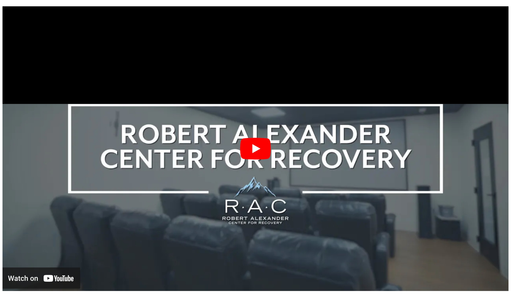
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