

Literature Review of Parental Opioid Abuse

The opioid epidemic has been gripping the nation for the past five years; countless numbers of people have lost their lives, hundreds of families have been torn apart, and there is no end in sight. It has been estimated that around 12 million adults in the United States are abusing opioids, but also within the United States, about 74% of all adults are parents (Benoit). Therefore, there is an unknown number of children living alongside adults who are addicted to opioids throughout the United States. In order to cater to the struggles of these children, it is necessary to understand the effects opioids have not only on the parents, but as well as their children as they develop and mature.

First, it is crucial to examine the overall outcomes that parental opioid abuse can have on children. Due to recent studies, society is well aware that parental opioid abuse will negatively affect both a child's social functioning ability, their educational path as well as putting them at a higher risk of psychopathy. This is because of the instability brought upon the home by the lack of guidance from the addicted parent, as well as the possibility of intervention from Child Protective Services. Furthermore, opioid addiction does not often stand-alone – it is more than likely accompanied by socioeconomic concerns, family turmoil, health problems, and domestic abuse which will only further put a child's well-being in danger (Benoit). Therefore, it is clear that opioid abuse does not only harm the addict but as well as those around them, and it especially harms their children.

In order to fully comprehend a child who has experienced parental drug abuse, it is important to investigate the parent, their parenting style, their habits, and how their drug abuse impacts their own life. Parents experiencing substance abuse disorder are more likely to mistreat their children, whether it be through abuse or neglect. To determine the level of maltreatment a child could receive, it truly depends upon the amount of a substance abused, the

duration of abuse, and the type of substance (Kepple). Furthermore, these children are more likely to be removed from the care of their parents, as seen in Florida where there is a direct relationship between prescription opioid rates and child removal rates (Storch). Most notably though, parents who abuse opioid have tremendous barriers to overcome when interacting with the health care system. Often times, parents will not provide medical care for their children in fear of arrest and jail time for their own abuse. Therefore, this results in children receiving little to no medical care, an increased likelihood of Children Protective Services involvement, and children having both social and educational development deficiencies (Ahmed). Although the parenting style of an addict will vary on a spectrum from neglectful to abusive, their focus on their addiction will always harm their child.

There have been a multitude of studies done that inspect the effects of parental drug abuse; all of the studies have concluded that parental drug abuse, including opioid abuse, leads to long-term negative effects in children. Educationally, these children are much less likely to experience success in life due to instability in the home, attention disorders, impulsivity, and stress disorders. Furthermore, the mitigating factors of drug abuse, such as socioeconomic strain and domestic abuse, also negatively impact a child's ability to do well in school (Elk et al). Socially, children whose parents are addicted to opioid are much less likely to mature into successful adults. In other terms, these children are more likely to experience addiction and participate in criminality, and they are less likely to become societally involved within their own community. Furthermore, it was found that boys who experienced parental opioid abuse were even less likely than their female counterparts to become resilient adults (Catalano). In all, the most notable impacts of parental opioid abuse are seen educationally and socially.

As horrific as the opioid epidemic is, it is absolutely crucial to have open and clear conversation about the adverse effects it has been having on our society as a whole, but especially children. The research indicates that there is a segment of the population that will have both social and educational deficiencies as well as a tumultuous childhood. Moving forward, it is necessary to examine our resources and craft solutions for not only those addicted to opioids but also the children who have grown up with opioids.

Works Cited

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