How We Talk About Addiction Matters
Comparing SUD to Other Chronic Conditions

Knowledge Domain__________________________

Substance use disorder (SUD) is a chronic disease that affects the brain’s reward, motivation, and memory systems. SUD shares many features with other chronic diseases, such as genetic disposition, environmental influences, and disease progression. Both SUD and many other chronic diseases are heritable and genes play a large role in the vulnerability to disease.

Like other chronic diseases, such as type 2 diabetes or asthma, SUD cannot be cured, but it can be managed. Treating SUD as a chronic condition instead of a moral failing, shifts the goal of treatment from a quick cure to long term management of the disease. Similar to other chronic disease, medication can be used to manage a person’s disease and reduce or eliminate their symptoms.

Recommended Group Activity____________________

Compare substance use disorder with other chronic diseases such as cancer, asthma, or heart disease.
- Do they have similar relapse patterns?
- Do they affect the body in similar or different ways?
- What other features do substance use disorder and other chronic disease share?

Did You Know

Like other chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and asthma, substance use disorder often involves cycles of relapse and remission.

To Learn More_____________________________________

Addiction as a Chronic Disease

ASAM Definition of Addiction
http://bit.ly/2kq0RhG

Be a Recovery Advocate!