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.

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 diseases, 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 diseases share?