

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE CONTACT:

Dr. Sharon Harris 516- 676-2008

safeglencove@yahoo.com

SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Comorbidity and Opioid Use Disorder

The term “comorbidity” in the addictions treatment field refers to the presence of one or more other mental illnesses that make the addiction worse. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), if an individual is diagnosed with a comorbid illness, addiction becomes even more complex, thus making it more difficult to address. In many cases, the problem is that other illnesses (such as depression or anxiety) usually aren't as obvious as the addiction so when a patient seeks opiate addiction treatment and are not open and honest about other mental illnesses they may have, doctors and therapists may fail to make the dual diagnosis. As a result, patients may receive treatment for their addiction only. The other mental illness will go untreated, which greatly increases the chances of relapse. While there are high rates of comorbidity and substance use disorder, opiate addicts are set apart by the severe mental and physical effects of their drug of choice.

Heroin is not only the most addictive drug but it's also illegal, highly socially stigmatized and incredibly risky. Serious heroin addiction makes it almost impossible to be a functioning member of society, and seriously impairs the addicts personal life. Having an underlying mental illnesses further exacerbates the situation. Comorbid disorders that are most commonly associated with an addiction to opiates are Anxiety and panic disorders, Depression, Alcoholism, Sleep disorders, Bipolar disorder (Manic Depression) Adult Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and schizophrenia. Individuals who are addicted to opioids are not the same person they used to be. Their brain is completely rewired making it extremely difficult to get back to its original state of mind.

There are many different treatment options for those suffering from addiction to opiates. A prescription medication-assisted treatment (MAT) is usually a helpful option. With that type of treatment, prescription drugs such as Suboxone, Vivitrol and Methadone are given to the patient to help eliminate the drug cravings. Vivitrol is a monthly injection classified as an opiate blocker. An opiate blocker blocks the effects of opiates, such as heroin and prescription pain

pills. An individual must be 14 days off opioids prior to getting the first injection. Suboxone is administered in a pill form or it can be an implant under the arm. Lastly, Methadone is used in a pill form and many doctors will prescribe Methadone when individuals are unsuccessful in their treatment while using Suboxone. These types of medicated-assisted treatments will help an individual while going through withdrawals. Overall, the medication will reduce cravings, drug use and prevent possible overdoses.

Counseling and therapy are also needed during the process of treatment especially if an individual is suffering from a mental illness as well. Support groups are always a good option for an individual suffering from anxiety and depression in order to assure them that they are not alone.

It is extremely important that the individual or loved one has a support system when going through this process. Rehabilitation centers and detox facilities are also treatment options that include support.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is a branch of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is charged with improving the quality and availability of treatment and rehabilitative services in order to reduce illness, death, disability, and the cost to society resulting from substance abuse and mental illnesses. For more information about SAMHSA please visit www.samhsa.gov.

The SAFE Glen Cove Coalition is joining in the fight against this epidemic by conducting an opioid prevention awareness campaign entitled, "Keeping Glen Cove SAFE," in order to educate and update the community regarding opioid use and its consequences. To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow us on www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition or visit SAFE's website to learn more about the Opioid Epidemic at www.safeglencove.org.