Mnemonics for DSM-IV Substance-Related Disorders

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Abstract: A series of acronyms was developed to assist in recalling the DSM-IV diagnostic criteria for substance-related disorders. In order to facilitate recall, most of the mnemonics are related in some way to the disorder itself. In general, each letter of the acronym relates to an element of the diagnostic criteria. These mnemonics are intended to be helpful in a variety of academic and medical settings. © 1998 Elsevier Science Inc.

Introduction

Substance abuse is a frequently encountered problem in the inpatient population. In order to help identify features associated with the various forms of substance intoxication and withdrawal we have developed a list of mnemonics based on criteria in the DSM-IV. These mnemonics are intended to help organize criteria in a variety of clinical settings and to assist in preventing faulty recall. They have been found to be helpful in teaching the DSM-IV criteria to residents within our teaching program. Mne- monics for selected DSM-III-R and DSM-IV disorders were previously published in an attempt to assist with criterion recollection [1–3].

Alcohol Intoxication

The six features from criterion C can be remembered by “SAM’S GIN.”

S - SPEECH SLURRED
A - ATTENTION IMPAIRMENT OR

M - MEMORY IMPAIRMENT
G - GAIT UNSTEADY
I - INCOORDINATION
N - NYSTAGMUS

Criterion C for “Sedative, hypnotic, or anxiolytic intoxication” can also be recalled by the mnemonic “SAM’S GIN.”

Alcohol Withdrawal

The eight features of criterion B can be recalled using the mnemonic “PAST NITE” (as in an individual who is experiencing symptoms of withdrawal from decreased intake over the past several nights).

P - PSYCHOMOTOR AGITATION
A - ANXIETY
S - SEIZURES (GRAND-MAL)
T - TRANSIENT HALLUCINATIONS OR ILLUSIONS

N - NAUSEA OR VOMITING
I - INSOMNIA
T - TREMOR (hand) INCREASED
E - EXCITABILITY-AUTONOMIC

Criterion B of “sedative, hypnotic, or anxiolytic withdrawal” can also be recalled by the mnemonic “PAST NITE.”

Amphetamine Intoxication

The nine features from criterion C can be recalled using the mnemonic “A CODE BLUE.”
A - AGITATION OR RETARDATION (psychomotor)

C - CARDIAC (tachycardia or bradycardia)

O - OCULAR (pupillary dilation)

D - DIAPHORESIS (or chills)

E - ENCEPHALOPATHIC-LIKE CHANGES (seizures, confusion, dyskinesias, dystonias, or coma)

B - BLOOD PRESSURE (elevated or lowered)

L - LOSS OF STOMACH CONTENT

U - UNSTABLE MUSCLE-ASSOCIATED CHANGES (diaphragmatic, cardiac, and skeletal) i.e., muscle weakness, respiratory depression, chest pain, or cardiac arrhythmias

E - EVIDENCE OF WEIGHT LOSS

Criterion C for “cocaine intoxication” can also be recalled by “A CODE BLUE.”

Amphetamine Withdrawal
The five features from criterion B can be recalled by the mnemonic “PANTS” (as in an individual who pants when out of breath).

P - PSYCHOMOTOR AGITATION OR RETARDATION

A - APETITE INCREASES

N - NIGHTMARES (vivid, unpleasant dreams)

T - TIREDNESS (fatigue)

S - SLEEP (hypersomnia or insomnia)

Criterion B for “cocaine withdrawal” can also be recalled by “PANTS.”

Cannabis Intoxication
The four features in criterion C can be recalled by the mnemonic “MEAT.” (The mnemonic is in reference to a possible increase in appetite.)

M - MOUTH DRY

E - ERYTHEMATOUS CONJUNCTIVA

A - APETITE INCREASED

T - TACHYCARDIA

Hallucinogen Intoxication
Criterion D can be recalled using the mnemonic “DISTORT.”

D - DISTORTED (blurred) VISION

I - INCOORDINATION

S - SWEATING

T - TACHYCARDIA

O - OPENING (dilation) OF THE PUPIL

R - RACING HEART (palpitations)

T - TREMOR

Inhalant Intoxication
The 13 criterion C features can be recalled using the mnemonic “DISRUPTS GLOBE.”

D - DIZZINESS

I - INCOORDINATION

S - SLURRED SPEECH

R - REFLEXES DEPRESSED

U - UNSTEADY GAIT

P - PSYCHOMOTOR RETARDATION

T - TREMORS

S - STUPOR (or coma)

G - GENERALIZED MOTOR WEAKNESS

L - LETHARGY

O - OCULAR (nystagmus)

B - BLURRED VISION (or diplopia)

E - EUPHORIA

Opioid Intoxication
Pupillary constriction (or dilation following an overdose) is present along with one of three features from criterion C. These three features of criterion C can be recalled by the mnemonic “SAD.”

S - SLURRED SPEECH

A - ATTENTION (or memory) IMPAIRMENT

D - DROWSINESS (or coma)

Opioid Withdrawal
These nine features from criterion B can be recalled by the mnemonic “ARMY FINDS” (as in a possible
Phencyclidine Intoxication

At least two of eight features from criterion C develop within an hour of phencyclidine use. These eight features can be recalled by the mnemonic “MAP STAND.”

References