

ADDICTION IN THE CLASSROOM: HIGH RATES OF SUBSTANCE USE AMONG TEACHERS

Nationally Recognized Addiction Expert, Dr. Indra Cidambi, Explores Drug and Alcohol Abuse in the Education Community and Why Teachers Often Delay Treatment

New York, NY – February 12, 2018 – Parents place their faith in the education system for not only education but also for care and development of their children. With teachers spending the majority of the day with kids, the role of teachers in shaping America’s children is extremely important. But drug and alcohol abuse can still affect those teaching our children. Educators are not immune from experiencing stressors or mental and physical illnesses. According to nationally recognized addiction expert and Medical Director of Center for Network Therapy, Dr. Indra Cidambi, the difference for teachers is that their status in society makes it difficult for them to seek treatment for certain illnesses as openly as others. “In my experience, teachers suffer from substance use disorders only at slightly lower rates than the general population, which hovers around 10%, and enter treatment late in the addiction cycle,” said Dr. Cidambi.

A 1990 study by the *Journal of Drug Education* surveyed 500 teachers in Texas and discovered higher rates of abuse of alcohol, amphetamines, and tranquilizers as compared to the national average. Amphetamine use in particular correlated with higher stress levels, as it assisted teachers in staying sharp and focused by providing an energy boost. Teachers in America are given responsibilities without the authority to make important decisions, paperwork can be overwhelming, and teaching standards are a political football, leaving teachers feeling overworked, underpaid and burnt out.

Not surprisingly, teachers feel stressed. According to a Penn State University report, 46% of teachers reported high levels of stress. “It’s not surprising some teachers turn to drugs or alcohol to relax or obtain relief from stress,” said Dr. Cidambi. “When teachers are stressed and burnt out, it affects their students. Research ⁽¹⁾ shows that students of ‘burnt out’ teachers had elevated levels of cortisol, which has been associated with learning difficulties as well as mental health problems,” added Dr. Cidambi.

“Teachers, given their status as mentors and role models, find it hard to admit any ‘moral’ weakness, making it difficult for them to seek treatment for substance abuse during the early stages of their addiction,” said Dr. Cidambi. Many teachers also do not fully realize that addiction is a chronic disease that calls for treatment. “I have also found teachers hesitate to navigate the Employee Assistant Program (EAP) rules if they are seeking time off in order to receive treatment for substance use disorders. They are unsure if they would be accepted back as teachers after they complete treatment successfully.”

Treating Teachers for Substance Use Disorders Has Its Challenges:

Teachers are usually in control of their environment and they have difficulty accepting the role of a patient, where they have to give up control. “Treatment providers need to be sensitive to this issue and work with teachers closely to earn their trust, as they sometimes battle with the fact that they are not in control,” said Dr. Cidambi. Teachers in treatment usually have some guilt associated with ‘abandoning their students’ in the middle of an academic year. “Care providers have to emphasize to them that they need to make the most of the ‘me time,’ so they can start their teaching career again,” added Dr. Cidambi.

Teachers across the board are worried about the path back to their job after treatment. “In order to effectively address this, I have found that having the employer, the patient and the care giver agree to a treatment plan and/or protocol is helpful. The employer knows what to expect from treatment and they can set concrete objectives for the teacher to meet in order to regain their job,” said Dr. Cidambi. Having this contract in place not only lowers stress levels for the patient, it also incentivizes them to participate fully in treatment.

“In my experience, treatment works best for teachers when it is provided close to home, enabling the integration of the home environment into treatment. Elevating the support they receive at home by bringing the family into treatment helps prevent relapses,” said Dr. Cidambi. “Shipping teachers to far away locations for treatment does not usually work over the longer-term, as the patients are in an ivory tower that has no resemblance or connection to their living environment,” added Dr. Cidambi. “Also, the teacher’s employer or EAP has no clue about the quality of treatment provided in remote locations. Recently, the New Jersey Education Association (NJEA) acknowledged as much, when they contracted with a behavioral health organization to find high quality, local referral services for their members after many of their members had a nightmarish treatment experience at a treatment facility located in a different state,” said Dr. Cidambi.

(1) University of British Columbia 2016 study.

For more information on substance abuse dependency, addiction and treatment please go to www.RecoveryCNT.com.

About Dr. Indra Cidambi

Indra Cidambi, M.D., Medical Director, Center for Network Therapy, is recognized as a leading expert and pioneer in the field of Addiction Medicine. Under her leadership the Center for Network Therapy started New Jersey’s first state licensed Ambulatory (Outpatient) Detoxification program for all substances nearly three years ago. Dr. Cidambi is Board Certified in General Psychiatry and double Board Certified in Addiction Medicine (ABAM, ABPN). She is the Vice President of the New Jersey Society of Addiction Medicine. She is fluent in five languages, including Russian.

About Center for Network Therapy

Center for Network Therapy (CNT) was the first facility in New Jersey to be licensed to provide Ambulatory (Outpatient) Detoxification Services for all substances of abuse – alcohol, anesthetics, benzodiazepines, opiates and other substances of abuse. Led by a Board Certified Addiction Psychiatrist, Indra Cidambi, M.D., experienced physicians and nurses closely monitor each patient’s progress. With CNT’s superior client care and high quality treatment, Dr. Cidambi and her clinical team have successfully detoxed roughly 1500 patients in five years. CNT also offers Partial Care and IOP programs.

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