

New Thinking About the Drug Epidemic in the Time of COVID-19

Robert L. DuPont, MD

President, Institute for Behavior and Health, Inc.

www.IBHinc.org

Addiction is Chemical Slavery -- *Brain Biology, Genetics and the Environment*



Drugs are chemicals that super-stimulate the brain's complex reward system



Hardwired into the brain to promote behaviors necessary to the survival of the species – prototypes are food and sex



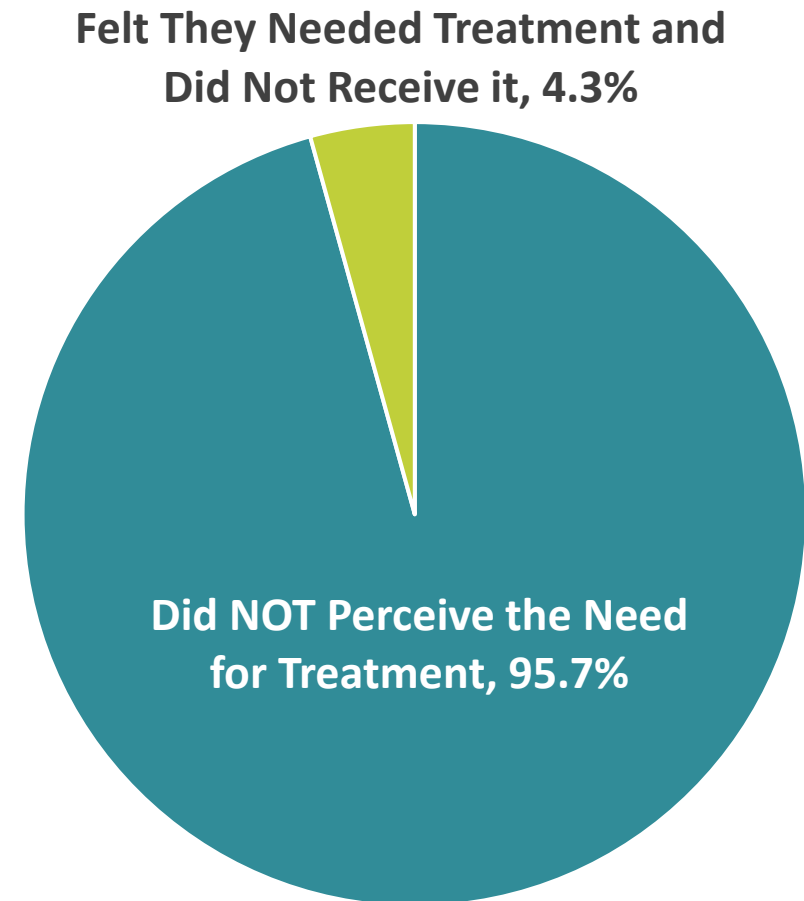
Animal studies show priority for drug use – they work harder for drugs than for other rewards

The National Drug Epidemic

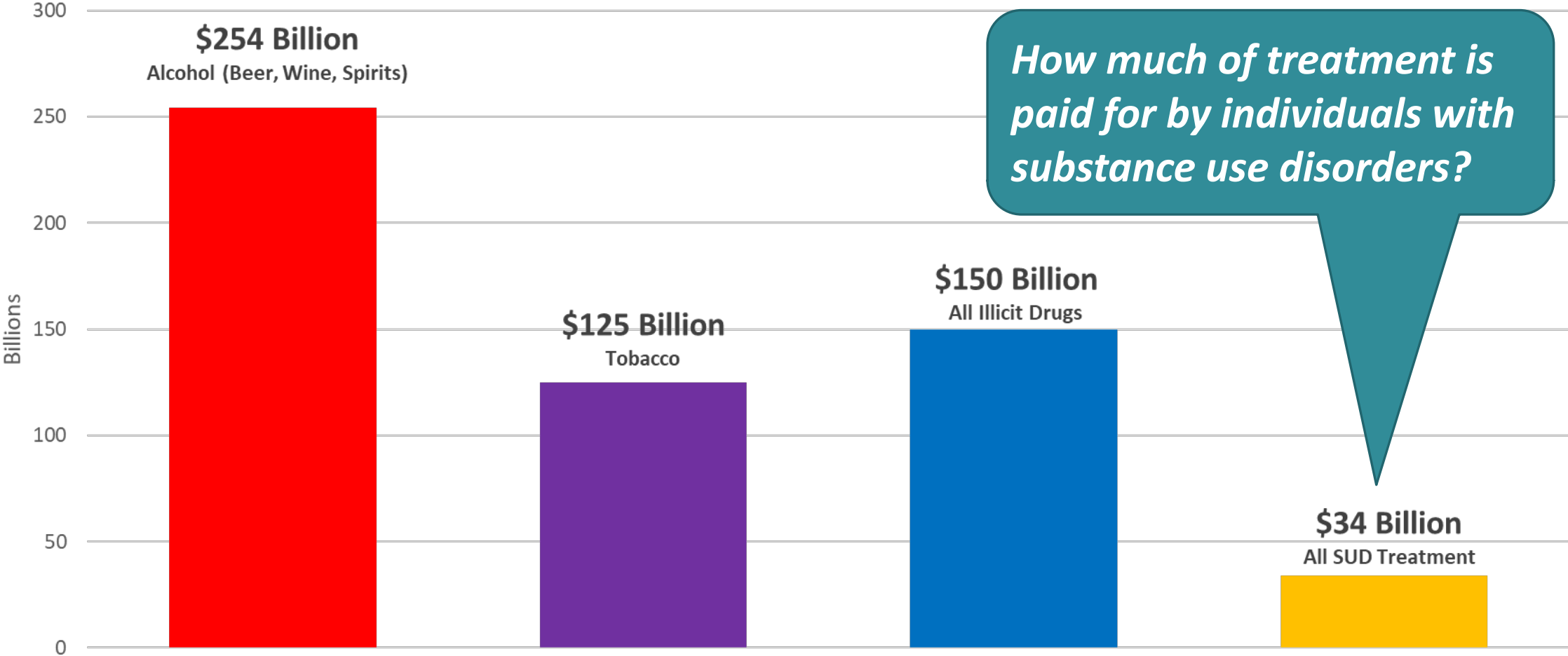
- Focus on opioids, particularly fentanyl – for good reason
- Drug overdose deaths are now the leading cause of death for Americans under the age of 50
- US life expectancy declined for 3 years in a row
- COVID-19 supercharges this epidemic by stress and isolation

Substance Use Disorder Treatment Reality Check

- Nearly 19 million Americans age 12 and older with SUDs in the US who did not receive specialty treatment in 2019
- Over 95% did NOT want treatment

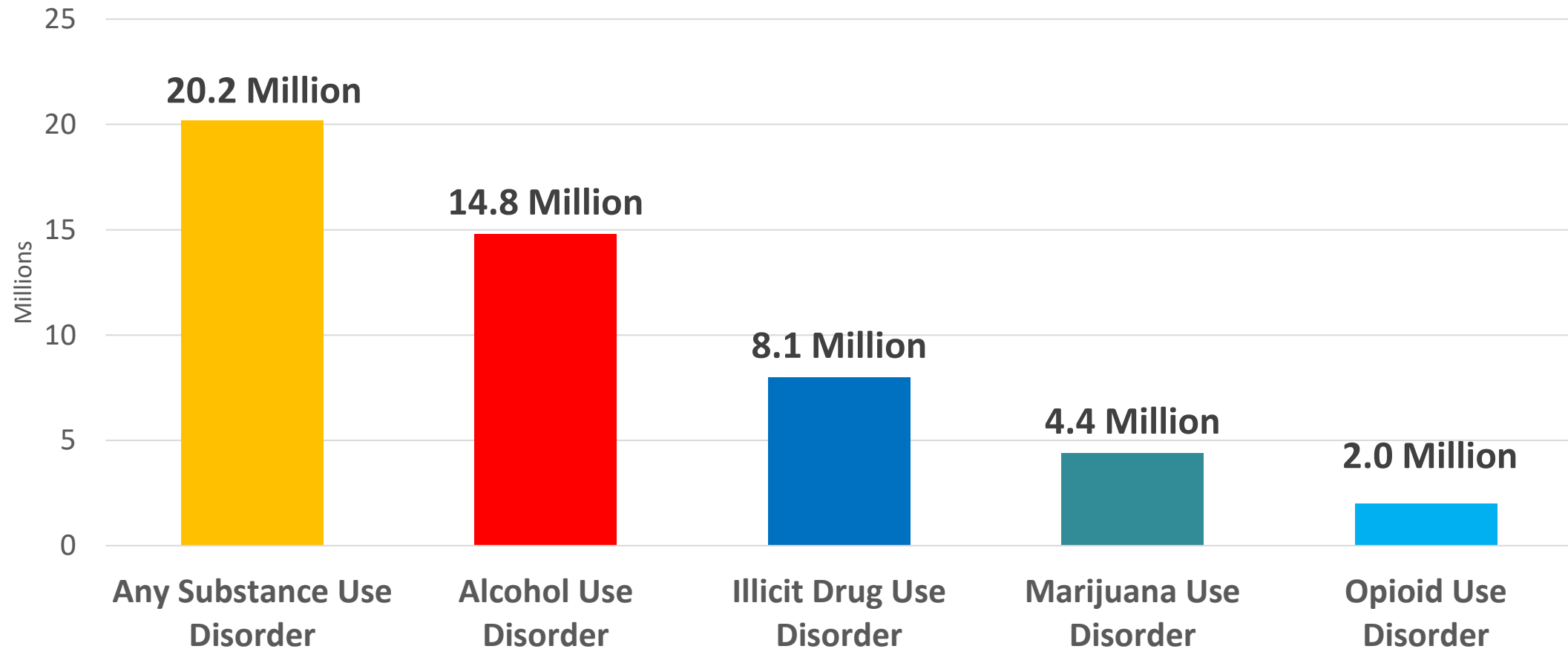


Annual Spending on Drugs and Substance Use Disorder Treatment in the US



Substance Use Disorders in the US

In the Past Year Among Americans Age 12+



Substance-Specific?

- Substance use disorder diagnoses
- Medication-assisted treatment
- Any future vaccines

- BUT drug addiction is not substance-specific

Polysubstance Use Among Drug-Caused Deaths in Florida

Drug	# Drug Caused Deaths	In Combination with other Drugs	Median # Drugs
Alprazolam	566	96.2%	3
Carisoprodol	33	94.2%	3
Cocaine	830	85.8%	2
Diazepam	162	99.3%	4
Fentanyl	642	91.0%	2
Heroin	706	96.3%	3
Hydrocodone	229	97.0%	3
Ketamine	6	100%	3.5
Methadone	262	90.3%	2
Morphine	858	95.8%	3
Oxycodone	535	94.8%	2
Tramadol	91	84.2%	2

The Larger Context – Commercialized Recreational Pharmacology (CRP)

- Super-stimulation of brain reward promoted for profit
 - Both legal and illegal drugs are “commercial” – legal is far more effective
- Global drug suppliers are successfully developing:
 - More synthetic as well as agriculturally-based drugs from all parts of the world including in our backyards
 - Selling more different chemicals that are more potent, less expensive and more easily accessible in a culture that normalizes recreational pharmacology
- Sobering sentinels: fentanyl and vaping crises

The Hijacked Brain in Addiction

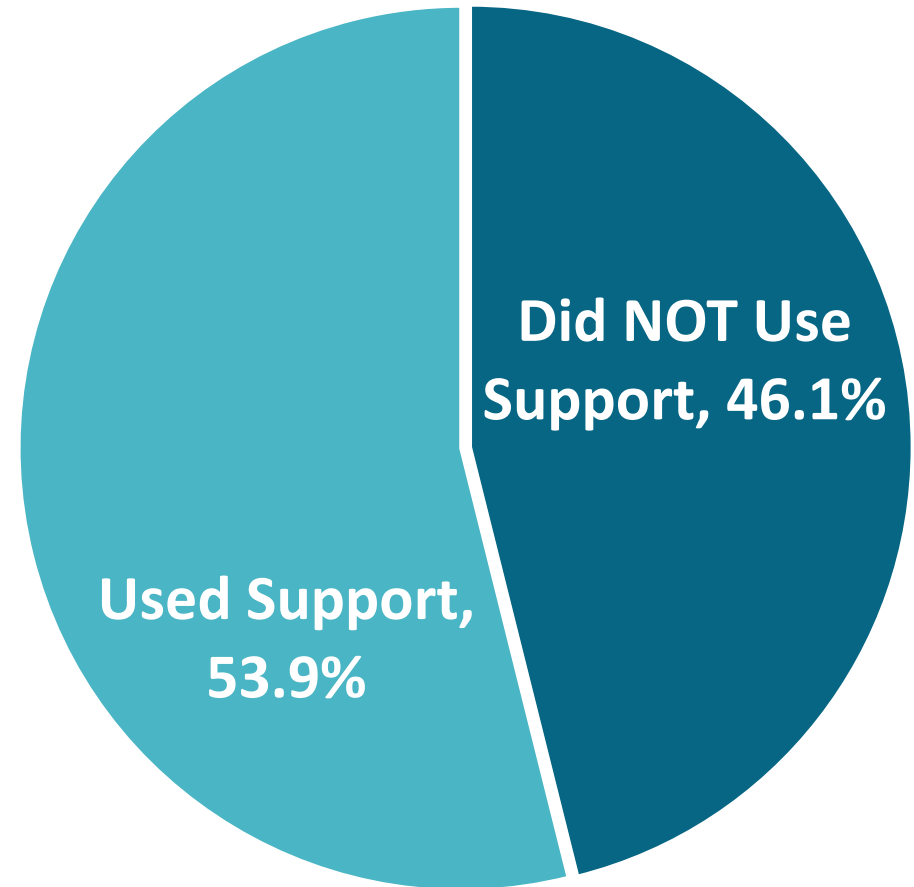
- A fundamental brain process from fooling around to falling in love
- Once “on” the addiction does not go away even with stopping use
- Why is it hard to convince addicted people that their drug use is hurting them severely and the need to stop using?
- The necessity serious crisis and external intolerance of continued drug use

The NEW Hope in Global Drug Policy: Recovery from Substance Use Disorders

- Not an event – a lifelong process and an inspiring miracle
- Addiction is more than using drugs and recovery is more than not using drugs
- ***“A voluntarily maintained lifestyle characterized by sobriety, personal health, and citizenship”***
- Resentment to Gratitude – Dishonesty to Honesty
- In recovery there a new person who is “better than well”

A Growing Recovery Community

- An estimated 22.3 million adults in the US are in recovery
 - “Used to have a problem with drugs or alcohol but no longer do”
- Many paths to recovery – often without formal support



Common Supports Used to Reach and Sustain Recovery

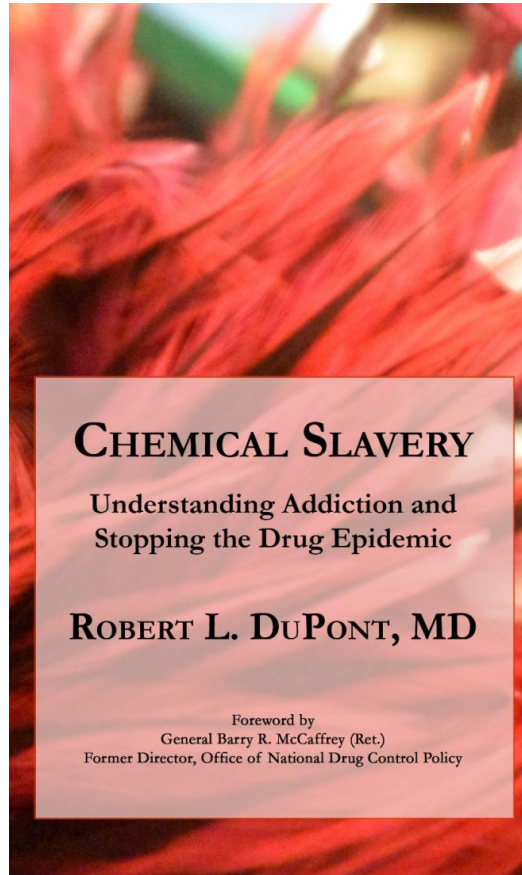
- 28% used formal SUD treatment
- 22% used recovery support services (faith-based recovery services, sober living environment, recovery community centers, etc.)
- 45% used mutual-help groups (12-Steps: Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Celebrate Recovery, SMART Recovery, etc.)
- 8.6% used anti-relapse/craving medication
 - 1.4% used methadone
 - 3.3% used buprenorphine/buprenorphine-naloxone

Three Questions for People in Recovery –

1. What was your life like while you were using drugs?
 2. What happened to get you to stop using drugs and get into recovery?
 3. What is your life like now in recovery?
- The person who is in active addiction is a dramatically different person from the person who is in recovery

What's Next?

- Update our understanding of addiction to improve both prevention and treatment
- Polydrug problem, sobriety and character development
- Celebrate and promote recovery – get “evidence” from the 23 million Americans now in recovery
- Turn back the drug epidemic by rejecting commercialized recreational pharmacology
- Foster recovery with and without either medications or treatment



Chemical Slavery: Understanding Addiction and Stopping the Drug Epidemic (2018)

Thank You!

- www.IBHinc.org
- www.OneChoicePrevention.org
- www.StopDruggedDriving.org



References + Resources

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