

Experts Call for Better Addiction Medicine Education for Physicians



Many doctors fail to diagnose and treat substance use disorders, in part because they have not been educated about addiction medicine, according to three experts.

They call for better training in this week's *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

A number of diseases are caused by substance use disorders, and hospitals are "clogged" with patients suffering from these illnesses, write Dr. Evan Wood of the University of British Columbia, Dr. Jeffrey H. Samet, President of the American Board of Addiction Medicine (ABAM), and Dr. Nora D. Volkow, Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

The experts write that new therapies and behavioral interventions have been developed for a number of addictions, Newswise reports. "Despite the availability of these evidence-based prevention and treatment strategies, only a small fraction of individuals receive prevention or treatment consistent with scientific knowledge about what works," Dr. Samet said.

"There is a remarkable gap between the science of addiction medicine and the care that patients actually receive," Dr. Wood said. "Ultimately, this stems from the fact that investments in research have not been coupled with strategies to adequately train physicians to deliver evidence-based care." He noted that only about 10 percent of people with an alcohol addiction receive recommended care. Most treatment for addiction in the United States and Canada is provided by laypersons, the article notes.

ABAM has accredited 18 addiction medicine fellowship programs across the country. Doctors who complete one of these fellowships are eligible to sit for the ABAM exam to become certified in addiction medicine.