

Responding to Mothers Who Are Opiate Dependent

Presented by

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Introduction

- ▶ **Una Isaacs**
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- ▶ **20 years experience in treatment of alcohol and drug dependence**
- ▶ **Specialize in Co-occurring Disorders**
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Overview

- ▶ **Characteristics of the Patient**
- ▶ **Characteristics of Pregnancy**
- ▶ **Challenges**
- ▶ **Suggestions**



Characteristics of the patient

- ▶ **16 to 45 years old**
- ▶ **Poor and disadvantaged**
- ▶ **History of physical, sexual and emotional abuse**
- ▶ **6th - 7th grade education**
- ▶ **Single / married**
- ▶ **Early entry into drug and alcohol abuse**
- ▶ **Opiate dependence**
- ▶ **Engage in prostitution to support their and partner's opiate dependency**
- ▶ **Great mistrust any authority including helping professions**



Characteristics of Pregnancy

- ▶ **Little or no health care through the course of their life.**
- ▶ **Many do not know they are pregnant.**
- ▶ **Those who are aware do not seek services.**
- ▶ **Patients who do seek help were referred by DHS or a friend or were previous clients.**



Challenges

- ▶ **Helping professionals tend to see patient as a drug addict.**
- ▶ **For prenatal and postnatal care, helping professionals unwilling to understand and work with methadone clinic.**
- ▶ **No advocacy for bonding between mother and infant.**
- ▶ **No recognition or empathy for loss and trauma of having child taken away.**



Challenges

- ▶ **System does not encourage mother to get well.**
- ▶ **No understanding or treatment for woman's life history.**



Suggestions

- ▶ **Drop the stereotype / label.**
- ▶ **Take the time to acknowledge the patient as a human being not a drug addict.**
- ▶ **Educate self about medical maintenance.**
- ▶ **Ideally, establish mobile maternity clinics as they do in all countries around the world.**

