

# **ETHNICITY AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

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# ETHNICITY AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

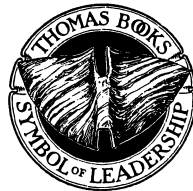
Prevention and Intervention

*By*

GRACE XUEQIN MA, PH.D.

*and*

GEORGE HENDERSON, PH.D.



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*This book is dedicated to health care professionals who make it possible for their clients or patients to achieve healthy and substance-free lifestyles.*



## PREFACE

A mple research findings support the notion that in order to be optimally effective treating patients or clients, health care practitioners must have an adequate understanding of cultures different from their own. Although this book focuses most of its attention on ethnic minority substance abusers, considerable mention is made of their White peers, too. Thus, we offer cultural points and counterpoints—all of them given to achieve three objectives: (1) to make care providers aware of cultural factors that affect substance abuse and cessation; (2) to review multidisciplinary research studies in order to ascertain helpful and unhelpful health care practices; and (3) to provide practical suggestions for improving community-wide substance prevention and intervention programs.

The areas of knowledge covered in this book range from theoretical issues to historical perspectives, from objective data to subjective interpretations of them, from traditional to iconoclastic approaches to health care. And we have opted to use a spiral method of content; that is, information discussed in Part One is revisited again in greater detail in other parts of the book. The risk in this strategy is that some readers will view it as data overload instead of repetition for a positive effect. In the end, we decided that if we were to err it would be on the side of presenting too much instead of too little information.

From the beginning, we have tried to answer three questions: What kind of treatment and services do most ethnic minority substance abusers receive in our nation's hospitals, clinics and other community rehabilitation facilities? How effective are those programs? What can be done, when necessary, to improve the quality of treatment and services? The triadic relationship between culture, ethnicity and substance use is evident in answers to those questions.

Implicit throughout this volume is our belief that *how* care is given to substance abusers is just as important as *what* kind of care they receive. We know that there are many culturally sensitive and organizationally effective practitioners scattered throughout the United States. Our concern is that there are

too few of them. Therefore, it is also a goal of this book to be of value to college and university professors, substance abuse workshop presenters, and in-service consultants who prepare professional helpers and paraprofessionals to render quality services to substance abusers.

As we edited the final drafts of the manuscript, it became evident to us beyond all doubt that it is counterproductive to treat all substance users and abusers as though they are a homogeneous group. In terms of ethnic minorities, we offer data that show which substance abuse behaviors African American, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans have in common as well as others that they do not share. We believe that it is important to be aware of these cultural similarities and differences. It is also important that care is taken to avoid creating ethnic group stereotypes and generalizations that do not leave room for individual differences. Therefore, being culturally aware to the extent the contributors to this book recommend can be a daunting challenge, but it is not an impossible one.

More than anything else, it is our wish that this book will help care providers to skillfully improve the quality of help they give substance abusers. That is not much for them to do; it will be life-threatening to substance abusers if they refuse to do it. If one person at risk is helped because of someone reading this book, the effort was worthwhile.

GRACE X. MA  
GEORGE HENDERSON

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# **ETHNICITY AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE**



**PART I**  
**ETHNICITY MATTERS**



# Chapter 1

## CONCEPTS OF ADDICTION IN ETHNIC MINORITY POPULATIONS

GEORGE HENDERSON AND GRACE XUEQIN MA

Substance abuse is a significant public health problem for all racial and ethnic groups. And it is becoming increasingly important to understand its impact on the ethnic minority groups that comprise American society, especially because they now account for 29.4 percent of our nation's population: Hispanics (12.5%), Blacks (12.3%), Asians and Pacific Islanders (3.7%), and American Indians, Eskimos and Aleuts (0.9%). The U.S. 2000 census documents an Hispanic population increase of 61.2 percent (from 21.9 million to 35.3 million), the Black population increased 15.7 percent (from 30 million to 34.7 million), the Asian and Pacific Islander population increased 45.2 percent (from 7.3 million to 10.6 million, and the American Indian, Eskimo and Aleut population increased 25 percent (from 2 million to 2.5 million).

The White flight out of our nation's major urban centers, combined with a significant influx of Blacks and Hispanics in particular, has resulted in nearly half (48) of the nation's largest cities being occupied mainly by ethnic minorities. Along with those changes have come differences in community substance use and dependency patterns.

### DEFINITIONS

The term *drug addiction* is synonymous with *substance dependence* or *substance abuse*. These terms imply a physiological increase of tolerance to a substance; that is, more and more of it is required to achieve the same effect. When a substance addiction develops, the dependent individual cannot wait too long