**ADA 2250 Reflection Paper**

I came in to this course expecting horrifying pictures of drug abusers and what the drugs had done to their bodies. This is not at all what happened. I was faced with a good read that gave me enough knowledge on drug users, abusers, and the drugs themselves to make an educated decision. Having abstained from drugs my entire life, I have always thought about trying some to experience the things I hear so many people talking about. This class has given me the wisdom to decide what I should and shouldn’t do, if I ever do try. At this point, the risk of even one-time use by an inexperienced user such as myself still seems too great.

By learning about the drugs themselves and the chemical things they do as well as the psychology behind them I am happy so say my definition of addiction has changed. Before, I believed addiction was the inability to abstain from a drug due to a mixture of the high provided and a few of withdrawal symptoms. Now, I know that addiction has much more of a psychological factor. Now, I think addiction still contains a factor of fear of withdrawal, but now it is more an active choice to take the drug and experience the high rather than not taking the drug and not experiencing the high. How is this different? This is different because withdrawal doesn’t play such a huge factor. Through this course, I’ve found out that withdrawal can be avoided to an extent by taking carefully controlled doses and waiting for the tolerance of the body to the drug to normalize again. There are still those that fall in to my original definition, but those I categorize as drug abusers rather than drug users. Those are the people that cannot live without the drugs because of withdrawal. Recreational use in my definition is using the drug once or twice, while addiction is the psychological need to experience the high again.

I think due to this class, my perspectives on addiction have clearly changed. The causes of use/abuse for me are now more based in psychology rather than physiology. For me, drugs are now not as ‘evil’ as previously depicted. They took on more of a medical connotation. Abuse n for me means overuse and consequential addiction, rather than low doses with controlled use. My opinions of drug users and abusers have very much lessened than before. Now, I understand more why they do what they do because I understand what the drug does and its effects.

One thing I learned from this course that I will remember 5 years from now is that neurons are not just in the brain. I think knowing that the effects of drugs play out in the entire body rather than just the brain is very important to understanding the body’s autonomic responses to drugs and not just the feelings the user experiences.

As a final note, I’ve learned much more about the drugs themselves and their effects on the body rather than the users who take the drugs. I feel this is a great way of explaining drugs and drug users as it takes away the bias of seeing the faces of drugs, and solely looking at them from a medical point of view. Personally, I’ve learned quite a bit about drugs and their effects and will no longer judge drug users as harshly as I did before I took this class.