SUBSTANCE ABUSE TERMS IN SPANISH: A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE HELP COMBAT ADDICTION

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Conversing on the topic of substance abuse has become increasingly important in the Spanish-speaking community. As a medical professional, it is important to be familiar with the right terminology used when talking about addiction and recovery. With this in mind, here we provide you with an overview of some of the most common terms related to substance abuse that are used in Spanish-speaking countries worldwide. This will help ensure your practice is following best practices for language access, as well as providing effective communication between yourself and patients from these backgrounds.

What is Substance Abuse Terminology, and How Does It Help With Addiction Treatment with Spanish-speaking Patients?

The Spanish-speaking population in the United States is growing, and with it brings an increased need for substance abuse treatment. Knowing how to access these resources can be a challenge, but learning about how Spanish-language tools and programs can

help support successful addiction treatment outcomes could make all the difference.

For anyone suffering from addiction, finding the right resources and support is essential to beating their habit, as studies have indicated that people who undergo treatment while communicating in their native tongue experience better outcomes than those who do not have access to treatments conducted primarily in one's own primary language.

To accurately describe the person you are treating, visit our "Adjectives in Spanish" page.

Substance abuse in Spanish can provide a crucial layer of assistance for those with limited English language proficiency. From providing comprehensive help to connecting people with culturally competent addiction treatment providers, there are many ways that substance abuse in Spanish can be used to improve outcomes among individuals struggling with substance use disorder.

Underground Lingo for Drug Abuse

Drug and alcohol use, misuse, and abuse are unfortunately common in all languages throughout the world. In Spanish, the terminology used to describe different forms of substance abuse is often quite distinct from that used in English. For instance, terms such as "tugurio" or "domicilio" are used to refer to places where drug-related activities take place – an underground clubhouse, for example – or a dwelling which is used for drug deals and use. Additionally, there are several Spanish words that correspond to specific actions related to substance usage, including "escobillar," referring to drug inhalation (through a pipe), "drogón," which is slang for someone who takes drugs regularly, and "rumiar," meaning sipping spirits until drunk. By understanding these terms, one can better grasp the nuances of Spanish-language conversations related to drug and alcohol abuse.

Different Types of Substance Abuse Terminology in Spanish

When treating a patient who speaks Spanish, it's crucial to understand that the correct word choice and vernacular can have a big impact on recovery. Thankfully, Spanish has its set of substance-related vernacular, including words for abuse (abusos), addiction (adicción) and intoxication (intoxicación). Of course, these words are especially useful for doctors, psychologists and therapists, so they can effectively communicate information

about drugs and other substances appropriately. Specific words may be different depending on which Spanish-speaking country one is in; however, foundational terms remain consistent throughout all Spanish-speaking regions. A doctor familiar with this vernacular may not only offer clarity to those whom he or she is treating—it can also make a real difference when striving toward positive outcomes related to substance use disorder.

Spanish Term	English Term
Abuso de sustancias	Substance abuse
Alcoholemia	Blood alcohol level
Alcoholismo	Alcoholism
Drogadicción	Drug addiction
Drogodependencia	Drug dependence
Enfermedad por el alcohol	Alcoholism
Farmacodependencia	Pharmaco Dependence
Hábito nocivo del alcohol	Harmful drinking habit
Intoxicación alcohólica	Alcohol intoxication
Mal uso de las drogas	Misuse of drugs
Rehabilitación para toxicómanos	Rehabilitation for addicts
Síndrome de abstinencia	Abstinence syndrome
Síndrome de dependencia a las drogas	Drug dependency syndrome
Tolerancia a la droga	Drug tolerance
Toxicidad alcohólica	Alcohol toxicity
Toxicomanía	Drug addiction, substance abuse

Spanish Term	English Term
Tratamiento contra el abuso de sustancias	Substance abuse treatment
Tratamiento de desintoxicación	Detoxification treatment
Dependencia química	Chemical dependency
Adicción a las drogas	Drug addiction

Terms to avoid with a person who abuses substances:

These terms are often seen as negative and can make someone feel like they are less of a person.

English	Spanish
Person with a substance abuse problem	Persona con problemas de abuso de sustancias
Recovering addict/alcoholic	Adicto/alcohólico en recuperación
Sober person	Persona sobria
Slip	Brevés
Person with an addiction	persona con una adicción
Person with a drug problem	persona con problemas de Drogas
Person with substance use disorder	Persona con trastorno por consumo de sustancias
Person with OUD or person with opioid addiction (when substance in use is opioids)	Persona con OUD o persona con adicción a opiáceos (cuando la sustancia consumida son opiáceos)
Patient	Paciente

English	Spanish
Person in active use; use the person's name, and then say "is in active use."	Persona en activo; utilice el nombre de la persona y diga "está en activo".
Person with alcohol use disorder	Persona con trastorno por consumo de alcohol
Person who misuses alcohol/engages in unhealthy/hazardous alcohol use	Persona que abusa del alcohol/consume alcohol de forma insalubre/peligrosa
Person in recovery or long-term recovery	Persona en recuperación o en recuperación de larga duración
Person who previously used drugs	Persona que ha consumido drogas anteriormente
Abstinent from drugs	Abstinencia de drogas
Not drinking or taking drugs	No bebe ni toma drogas
Not currently or actively using drugs	No consumen drogas actualmente ni de forma activa
Person who uses drugs	Persona que consume drogas
Baby born to mother who used drugs while pregnant	Bebé nacido de madre que consumió drogas durante el embarazo
Baby with neonatal opioid withdrawal/neonatal abstinence syndrome	Bebé con síndrome de abstinencia neonatal a opiáceos
Baby with signs of withdrawal from prenatal drug exposure	Bebé con signos de abstinencia por exposición prenatal a drogas
Newborn exposed to substances	Recién nacido expuesto a sustancias

English	Spanish
Drug use disorder	Trastorno por consumo de drogas
Substance abuse disorder	Trastorno por abuso de sustancias

Terms to use with a person who abuses substances:

English	Spanish
It 's important to be honest with your doctor about your substance abuse	Es importante que seas sincero con tu médico sobre tu abuso de sustancias.
Your doctor can help you develop a treatment plan that 's right for you	Su médico puede ayudarle a desarrollar un plan de tratamiento adecuado para usted.
You may need to see a specialist if your substance abuse is severe	Es posible que necesite ver a un especialista si su abuso de sustancias es grave.
There are a variety of treatments available for substance abuse including medication and therapy	Existen diversos tratamientos para el abuso de sustancias como la medicación y la terapia.
It 's important to follow your treatment plan and attend all of your appointments	Es importante seguir el plan de tratamiento y acudir a todas las citas.
You may need to make lifestyle changes such as avoiding triggers and staying away from people who use substances	Es posible que tengas que hacer cambios en tu estilo de vida como evitar los desencadenantes y mantenerte alejado de las personas que consumen sustancias.
Substance abuse can lead to serious health problems so it 's important to get help as soon as possible	El abuso de sustancias puede provocar graves problemas de salud por lo que es importante buscar ayuda lo antes posible.

English	Spanish
Your doctor can help you find resources and support groups in your community	Su médico puede ayudarle a encontrar recursos y grupos de apoyo en su comunidad.

Subtle Tips and Recommendations for your Patients in Spanish:

English	Spanish
Substance abuser: I don't see why I need to go to treatment. I can quit whenever I want. **Treatment provider:** addiction is a disease, and it's one that requires professional help to overcome.	**Abusador de sustancias:** No veo por qué tengo que ir a tratamiento. Puedo dejarlo cuando quiera. **Proveedor de tratamiento:** la adicción es una enfermedad que requiere ayuda profesional para superarla.
Substance abuser: I don't think I'm an addict. I only use it when I party and I can stop anytime. **Treatment provider:** addiction doesn't discriminate. It doesn't matter how or why you started using, the important thing is getting help to stop.	**Abusador de sustancias:** No creo que sea un adicto. Sólo lo consumo cuando salgo de fiesta y puedo dejarlo en cualquier momento. **Proveedor de tratamiento:** la adicción no discrimina. No importa cómo o por qué empezaste a consumir, lo importante es conseguir ayuda para dejarlo.
Substance abuser: But I don't want to go to rehab. Isn't there another way? **Treatment provider:** There are other options, but treatment is the best way to get on the road to recovery.	**Abusador de sustancias:** Pero no quiero ir a rehabilitación. ¿No hay otra manera? **Proveedor de tratamiento:** Hay otras opciones, pero el tratamiento es la mejor manera de encaminarse hacia la recuperación.

English	Spanish
Substance abuser: I'm not sure I'm ready to give up drugs and alcohol. **Treatment provider:** That's okay. We're here to support you through every step of the process, even if you're not sure you're ready yet. Just take it one day at a time.	**Abusador de sustancias:** No estoy seguro de estar preparado para dejar las drogas y el alcohol. **Proveedor de tratamiento:** No pasa nada. Estamos aquí para apoyarte en cada paso del proceso, incluso si aún no estás seguro de estar listo. Tómalo un día a la vez.
Substance abuser: Will insurance cover treatment? **Treatment provider:** Yes, most insurance plans will cover at least part of the cost of treatment.	**Abusador de sustancias:** ¿Cubrirá el seguro el tratamiento? **Proveedor de tratamiento:** Sí, la mayoría de los seguros cubren al menos parte del coste del tratamiento.

How to Choose the Right Substance Abuse Terminology for Your Needs?

When choosing terms related to substance abuse, it is important to know how these words can be interpreted and understand how they may affect those reading or hearing them. Substance abuse terminology carries significant power and should be used with caution and thoughtfulness. Depending on your individual needs, the right term or phrase can help convey the message you wish to communicate respectfully. It’s also helpful to think about potential audiences when selecting words – for example, consider whether more technical terms might work best for those knowledgeable about the field, or if simpler terms that are accessible to a wider audience are more appropriate. It’s indispensable not to rely solely on labels when discussing substance abuse, as individuals impacted by addiction can have varied experiences and struggles. Understanding your audience ahead of time will help you find the most appropriate word choices for any given situation.

Explaining the Different Treatment Options Available to Combat Substance Abuse in Spanish-speaking

Spanish-speaking individuals suffering from a substance abuse disorder have a variety of options when seeking treatment. [Among] the terms used to describe this form of affliction in Spanish include “adicción de substancias” and “uso indebido de drogas”. Depending on the severity and type of addiction, treatment plans may vary greatly. Professional intervention counselors are well-equipped with methods personalized to an individual’s particular needs that involve one-on-one counseling or even with family members present. Patients might also try outpatient therapy, which is where they leave at night while still receiving care during the day, or alternatively hospitalization may be required. Every patient has their own journey; however, there is available support to guide them through every step of recovery and increasing success rate along the way. Some of the treatments are:

English	Spanish	Definition
Inpatient treatment	Tratamiento hospitalario	Inpatient treatment is when an individual stays at a rehabilitation facility for a set period of time, usually 30 to 90 days. This type of treatment is beneficial for individuals who have a severe addiction and need around-the-clock care.
Outpatient treatment	Tratamiento ambulatorio	Outpatient treatment is when an individual receives treatment while still living at home. This type of treatment is typically less intensive than inpatient treatment and is best suited for individuals with a less severe addiction.

English	Spanish	Definition
Residential treatment	Tratamiento residencial	Residential treatment is similar to inpatient treatment, but the individual lives at the rehabilitation facility for the duration of their treatment. This type of treatment is beneficial for individuals who need a high level of structure and support.
Partial hospitalization	Hospitalización parcial	Partial hospitalization is when an individual receives intensive treatment during the day but returns home in the evening. This type of treatment is beneficial for individuals who need more support than what outpatient treatment can provide but do not require 24-hour care.
Sober living	Vida sobria	Sober living refers to group homes or other types of housing where individuals in recovery from addiction can live with others who are also in recovery. This type of housing can provide support and structure for individuals as they transition back into normal life after completing a rehabilitation program

English	Spanish	Definition
12-step programs	Programas de 12 pasos	12-step programs are Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) groups that help individuals recover from addiction by following a set of 12 steps. These programs are based on the belief that addiction is a disease that needs to be treated with abstinence from all drugs and alcohol.
Therapeutic communities	Comunidades terapéuticas	Therapeutic communities are long-term residential programs that focus on helping individuals recover from addiction through therapy, education, and work programs. These communities typically have a hierarchical structure where residents progress through different levels as they demonstrate their commitment to recovery.
Art therapy	Arteterapia	Art therapy is a type of therapy that uses art as a means of expression and communication. Art therapy can be beneficial for individuals in recovery from substance abuse disorders as it can help them express their emotions in a safe and creative way

Recovery and relapse prevention

Many Spanish-speaking patients who are battling issues related to substance abuse require comprehensive support. To bridge the communication gap with clinicians, Spanish-specific recovery and relapse prevention practices must be implemented. This

includes fluency in Substance Abuse Terminology, which ensures that complex ideas can be expressed without being limited by language barriers. From psychological counseling to support groups, access to effective treatments in Spanish should be accessible to provide Spanish-speaking patients with the best opportunity for sustained recovery. Once these steps are taken, Spanish patients can benefit from effective relapse prevention plans and maintain ongoing sobriety.