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Abstract

To make recovery, and not relapse, the expected outcome of the treatment of moderate to severe substance use disorders (SUDs), three currently missing elements would need to be emphasized: 1) the definition of long-term recovery as the goal of all treatment and post-treatment interventions; 2) the provision of sustained post-treatment monitoring and professional and peer support, including drug testing; and 3) the insistence by others around the patients on sustained abstinence as crucial for those suffering from moderate to severe and prolonged SUDs. Each of these three elements is central to the distinctive care management system of the state physician health programs (PHPs). This approach to the long-term management of SUDs fits with the new direction of healthcare for serious, chronic diseases – away from isolated, and expensive acute care episodes and toward sustained chronic disease management with long-term monitoring, support, and early re-intervention if and when needed.