

ADDRESSING SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER BY EMBRACING PEER SUPPORT SYSTEMS THAT UTILIZE COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE

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The societal impact of Substance Use Disorders (“SUD”) is as grave as ever, despite decades of extensive prevention and behavioral-based approaches. Although the medical community has come to recognize that SUD is a health condition, rather than a mere voluntary behavioral issue, society is resistant to shift from a behavioral-focused approach to a health-focused approach. A novel explanation for this disconnect is SUD treatment’s very close association with Complementary and Alternative Medicine (“CAM”) through the 12-step model, which is centered on spirituality. Society dismisses CAM as “quackery,” and thereby dismisses the credibility of SUD treatment all together because of its close association with CAM. Peer support systems utilize 12-step programs to provide ongoing care and support for people recovering from SUD. This Article analyzes such peer support systems, by

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evaluating their support, opposition, and potential barriers, and then concluding with recommendations to support these systems.