

Abnormal Psychology

Chapter 11 Case Study - Phama Jo

Phama Jo is a 75 year-old, European-American, woman that has been court-ordered to drug treatment as part of a plea deal for her third DUI (she received it two weeks ago). In lieu of jail, her attorney made a deal with the district attorney to give her drug rehabilitation and community service. This was in addition to heavy fines, the permanent loss of her drivers license and reparation payments to the owner of the business that she damaged with her car. Phama Jo was arrested after running into the side of a McDonald's restaurant when she attempted to use the drive through. The accident occurred around 2:30am as she was heading home after closing her bar for the evening. She has owned and operated her business for the past thirty years with tremendous financial success.

Phama Jo is currently widowed from her eighth marriage. The previous seven marriages all ended in divorce. Her only children are the product of her first marriage; a son (58) and daughter (55). She has three grandchildren, five great-grandchildren all live in a 50 mile radius of her home in Bangor, Maine. With the exception of her daughter (an alcoholic who works at the bar), she rarely sees any of her family. This bothers Phama Jo somewhat, yet she really is more interested in making money at "the business."

Phama Jo began drinking at the age of ten. Both of her parents were killed in a car accident when she was 9 and she went to live with her grandmother (Genieva). Genieva was an alcoholic and had several marriages as well. At the time that Phama Jo moved in, her grandmother was divorced for the fifth time and kept large amounts of alcohol in the home. Phama Jo and her friends would sneak drinks when her grandmother was away at work. Additionally, Phama Jo was arrested a couple of times for shoplifting and was often eventually suspended from school for fights with other girls throughout her two years in high school. During these years, she also stole money from her grandmother's purse to buy various items that she wanted.

Upon becoming pregnant at age 17, with the permission of her grandmother, Phama Jo married the 20-year-old father of the baby (Bud). She then dropped out of high school and moved to Portland. Bud was an alcoholic who abused her verbally and physically, yet the marriage lasted about five years. It was at this point that the couple divorced. By this time, she had two small children and a tenth grade education. To make ends meet, she began to prostitute herself at a local bar. She mentioned that she met the owner of the bar one night at a local dance and the two began to date. She said that she went out with him because he had a business and could

help her get fast money. It was shortly after they married, when he “helped” her enter “the profession” that would take her into a world of alcohol, abortions, sexually-transmitted diseases and physical abuse. By the time she was 27, she managed to scrape together enough money to leave with her children. The family took a bus to the Bangor area in the middle of the night.

Fast forward 50 years.....

Currently, Phama Jo suffers from several medical problems. She is diabetic, struggles with the early stages of lung cancer (she has smoked since she was 12), has chronic pelvic pain as a result of many STDs and has severe memory problems. The memory loss is likely due to heavy alcohol consumption (about a case of beer each day). She also takes multiple medications that do not mix well with alcohol. Some of them cause fairly severe stomach cramping and vomiting. She is used to this type of illness, as she has them nearly every morning with her hangover. Upon leaving jail five months ago, a penalty for her second DUI conviction in California (she spent 6 months on a release program where she worked during the day and reported to jail each evening), Phama Jo unsuccessfully attempted to cut back on alcohol . As with the many other times that she has tried to cut back over the past year, she was unsuccessful. When asked what has caused the relapses, she stated that after about a day or so without much alcohol, she got the shakes, severe diarrhea and stomach cramps. In addition, she mentioned that she became increasingly dizzy and nearly fainted several times. Each time she gave up and went back to her normal drinking behavior (at least a case of beer each day). It was at this point in the interview that Phama Jo announced that she is extremely proud of her ability to “hold her liquor” and only drink what she terms “soft booze.” For example, when asked to give a summary of how much she drinks in a day, she stated, “I don’t know how much I drink! I only drink the soft stuff! I am not like those sloppy drunks that swallow bottle after bottle of Vodka or Gin. I don’t smell like liquor either. If I have to give you a damn number it would be somewhere around 24 or 25 Coors Lights in a whole day! I hardly even know I drank it either!! I would like to see you swallow that much and not get buzzed! I am not like those useless, unemployed drunks. I work damn hard and I pay my taxes!!”

Over the past two years. Phama Jo has had several “run-ins” with the local police. Apparently she has refused to pay parking tickets that she received for parking outside of her business, and she was picked up for being drunk and belligerent with a cashier at her bank. It seems the cashier would not allow her to “cut” in front of another customer. As she put it, “I was busted and taken to a holding cell by some five-year-old prick with an attitude.” After her son bailed her out of jail, she asked him to stop at the local grocery store because she needed milk. Upon returning to the car, she had a case of beer. Her son became angry with her and attempted to

take the beer. She slapped him and called him a “good for nothing bastard like his father.” He left her in the parking lot. These types of exchanges are common with her son and grandchildren. She tends to be verbally abusive and lies about everything from her health to how old she is. She is not invited to family gatherings as she tends to get loud, obnoxious and drunk. For example, at a party for her youngest great-grandson’s Christening, she told the priest that he looked “gay.” It is for these reasons that her family is embarrassed of and avoids her as much as possible. This avoidance has greatly increased over the past three years or so. Prior to that, she was not as disruptive and played a bigger part in the lives of her children and grandchildren. She really doesn’t perceive her problems as all that bad. She mentioned several times that everyone drinks and drives a little. She just had the misfortune to get caught.

Please answer the following questions:

1. Based on what you have learned in this class so far, which diagnosis might you explore when working with Phama Jo?
2. For your diagnosis list the symptoms and circumstances from the case study that you would use as evidence for these diagnoses.
3. Based on the treatments you have learned about so far, what would you recommend and possible intervention to treat Phama Jo?