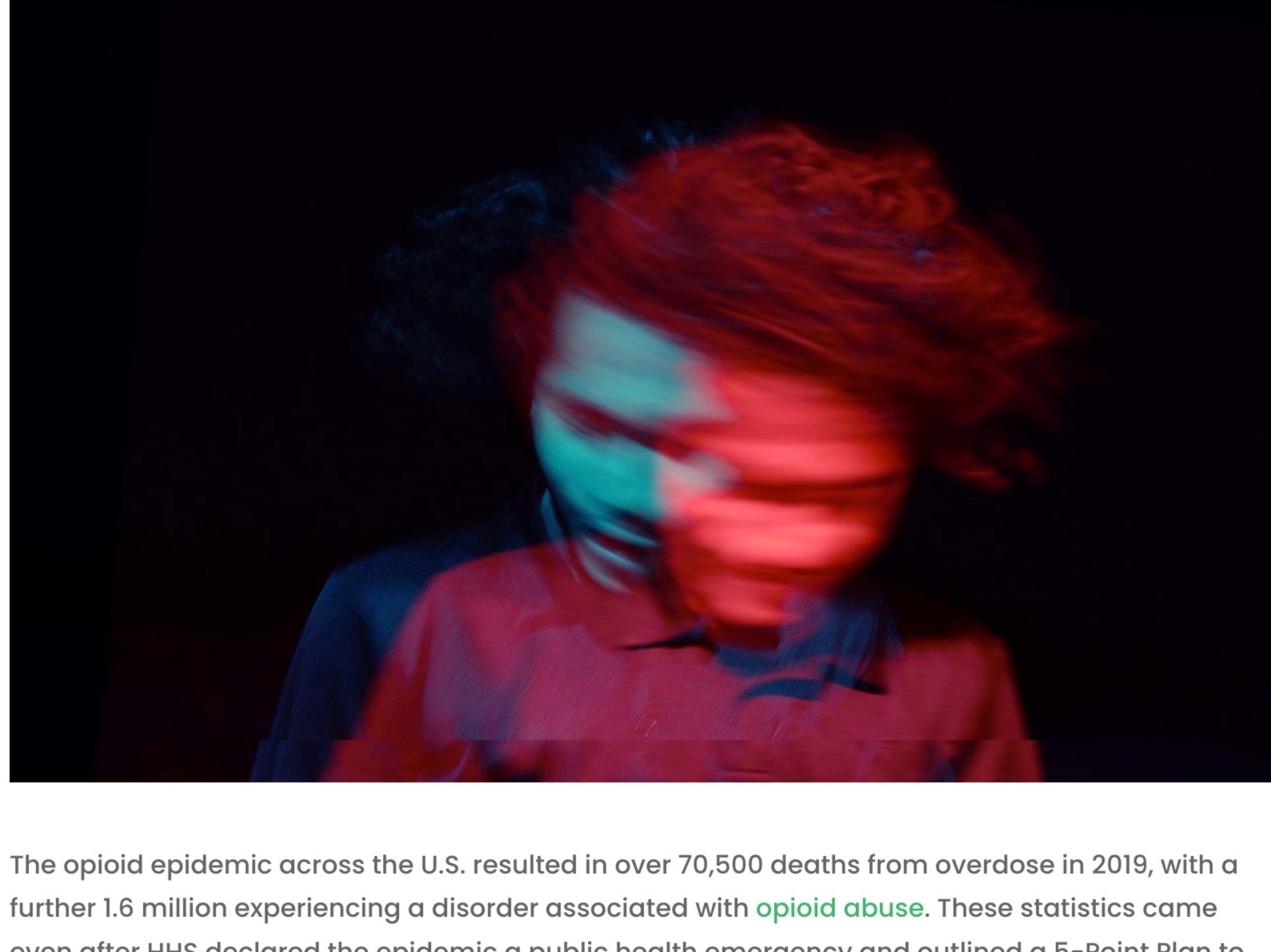


The Long-Term Impact On The Human Brain From Opioid Abuse

by Evolve Indy | Apr 19, 2022 | Drug Addiction, Drug Treatment | 0 comments



The opioid epidemic across the U.S. resulted in over 70,500 deaths from overdose in 2019, with a further 1.6 million experiencing a disorder associated with [opioid abuse](#). These statistics came even after HHS declared the epidemic a public health emergency and outlined a 5-Point Plan to overcome the medical and societal issue. It is understood that opioid addiction can affect anyone, so it is important to understand the long-term impact on the human brain from opioid abuse.

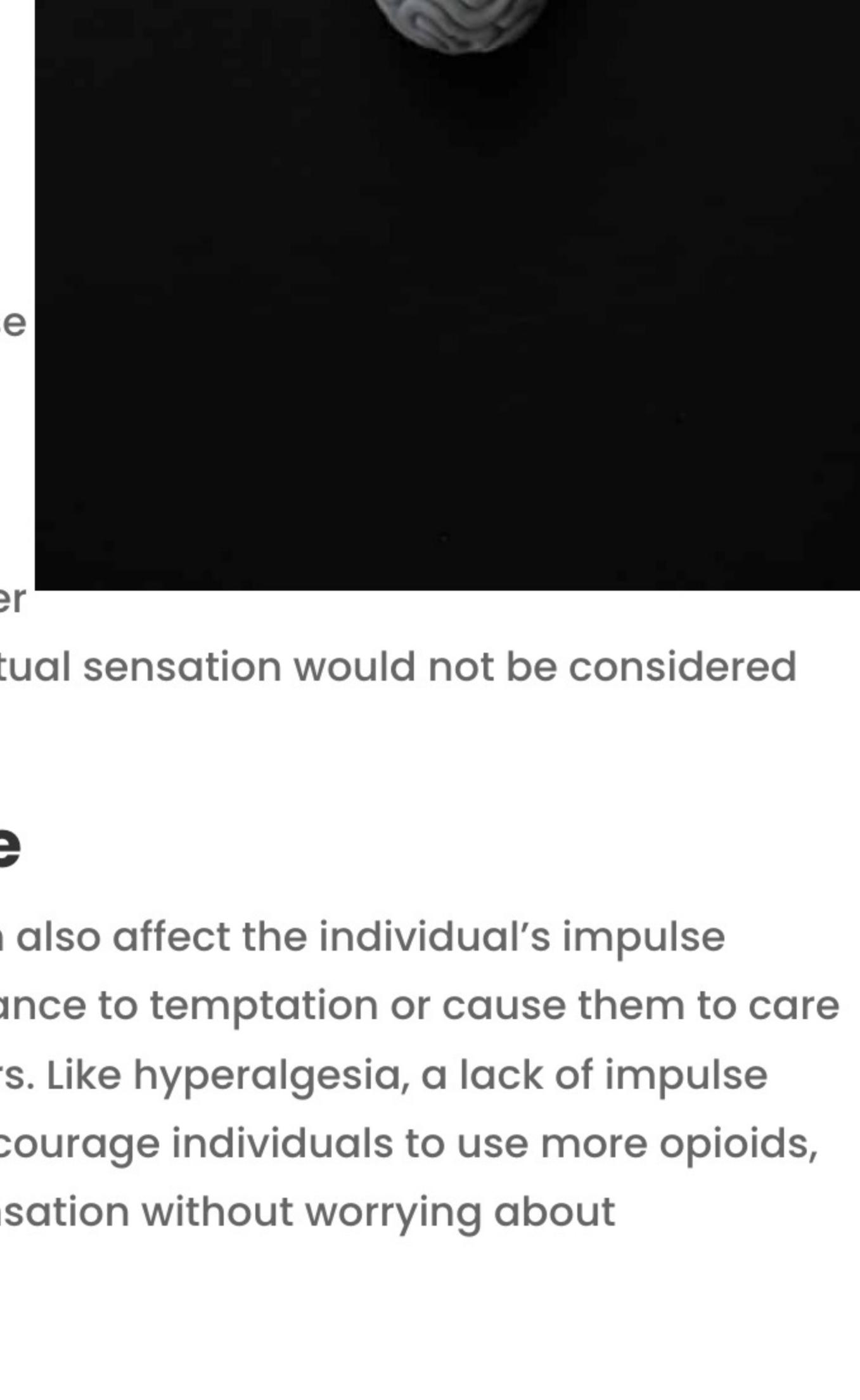


Opioid addiction

Opioid addiction is one of the major long-term impacts of continued opioid abuse. The drug targets the pleasure center of the brain, which encourages users to come back to opioids more regularly. They feel like they must constantly chase the sensation, whether to match previous feelings or because they believe they are unable to function without it. Addiction begins in the brain, but it can lead to other damaging effects, such as an overdose.

Brain damage from opioids

While 70,500-plus people died from an opioid overdose in 2019, the number of those who experienced an overdose is much higher. An overdose can lead to brain damage as it may cause the individual to stop breathing, therefore cutting off oxygen to the brain and causing irreparable damage, while even slower breathing can restrict the amount of oxygen to the brain. This can lead to numerous issues, including memory loss, balance and coordination problems, and trouble reading and writing, among others.



Hyperalgesia

Hyperalgesia is when the individual's sensitivity to pain increases. As opioids are a pain killer – especially for patients who experience chronic pain – this can increase the number of opioids consumed by the individual and creates a dangerous loop that could put them at risk of addiction or overdose. Long-term opioid abuse can affect pain receptors within the brain, and it could trigger discomfort at even the most minor touch, even if the actual sensation would not be considered painful to those who do not use opioids.

Impulse control from opioid abuse

Besides physical problems, long-term opioid abuse can also affect the individual's impulse control. Like other substances, opioids can inhibit resistance to temptation or cause them to care less about saying or doing things that could upset others. Like hyperalgesia, a lack of impulse control will create a potentially fatal loop, as it could encourage individuals to use more opioids, whether to numb the pain or experience the desired sensation without worrying about consequences.

Disrupted reward region

A reward region is a group of neural structures responsible for incentive salience, associate learning, and positively-valenced emotions, particularly ones involving pleasure as a core component.

Opioid abuse also affects your reward region, especially with long-term usage. The more opioids someone takes, the more tolerant they become to the effects. Over time, this will cause them to do more to achieve the same feeling. It can also impact other areas of your life, making activities you previously enjoyed feel laborious or not worth doing unless you have taken opioids beforehand. A reward region is a group of neural structures responsible for incentive salience, associate learning, and positively-valenced emotions, particularly ones involving pleasure as a core component.

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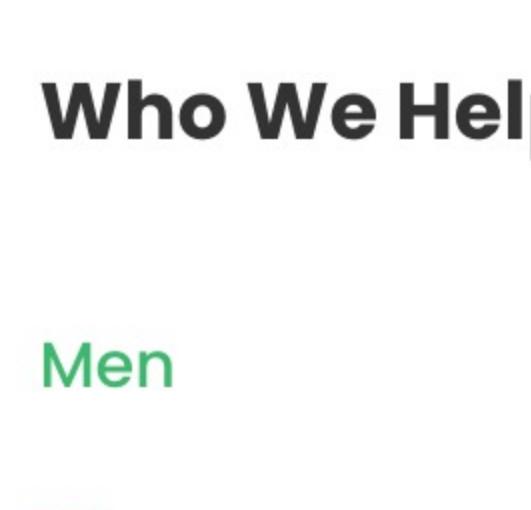
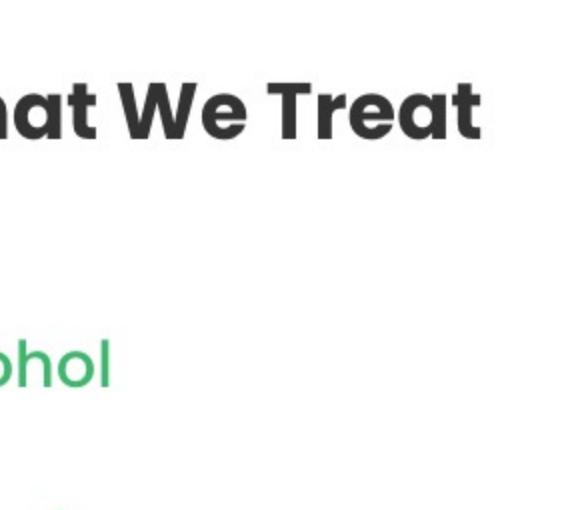
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