(Neuro)science and alcohol dependence syndrome related stigma

MIRJANA RADOVANOVIC

University Psychiatric Hospital Ljubljana
Alcoholism Treatment Center
Zahvala:
Conflict of interests

- None to declare

- In the past received educational support from: AstraZeneca, Eli Lilly, Janssen, Krka, Lundbeck
Agenda

- Problem definition
- Literature review – not comprehensive
- Clinical relevance
- Q&A
Carlo C. DiClemente

“Anyone who has treated addictions understands the challenges facing the addicted individual and the treatment provider, due to the sheer number of factors affecting why and how individuals become addicted and manage recovery.”

DiClemente, 2006
Stigma

= a label:
- that sets a person apart from others,
- links her or him with undesirable characteristics

and
- leads to avoidance by others and society.

Aromaa, 2011
Background

- Alcohol ⇒ SoAD in 9-15% of the population
  - the most prevalent drug used
  - 4% total burden of disease for society

  Mathers&Loncar, 2006

- Projections to 2030 place SoAD in the 4th place; after MDD, cardiovascular diseases and dementia

  Mathers&Loncar, 2006

- Slovenia - Cost of all consequences 4% GDP

  IVZ, 2008
Neuroscientific discoveries have a potential to provoke emotionally charged public opinions reflected in:

- Issues of access
- Decision making
- Human rights

Beliefs vs. politics vs. science vs. ethics ...
Informative neuroscience?

Alan I. Leshner (Science, 1997):
“Addiction Is a Brain Disease, and It Matters”

- Brain reward system “hijacked” by drugs.
  Robinson&Berridge, 2013

- “The neurobiology of behavior gone awry.”
  Volkow&Li, 2004
Addiction neuroscience did not destigmatize drug users.  
Courtwright, 2010

“Messages about “diseased brain” do not always lead to increased Tx-seeking and decreased drug use.”  
Bell et al., 2014

Limited research on effect of neurobiological understanding of psychiatric disorders on stigma.  
Hall et al. 2015 & Trujols, 2015
Beliefs about addiction in general population

- More neuroscientific knowledge, higher proportion of the general population believes addiction is a disease.
- More support for Tx-program funding.
- No influence on the level of stigma — if any: stigma increased over time.

Pescosolido et al., 2010
Schomerus et al., 2011
Medical doctors and alcohol use

- USA – surgeons: M 14%; F 25%
  Oreskovich et al, 2012

- USA – all doctors: 10-12% SUD, of those alcohol use disorder: 1/2
  McLellan et al, 2008

- High risk specialties: anesthesiology, emergency medicine, psychiatry
  Rose et al., 2014
Beliefs about addiction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Belief</th>
<th>GP</th>
<th>Psych.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Addiction = disease</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due to psychological woundedness</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOT a moral failing</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lawrence et al., 2013
Beliefs about addiction – cont’d

- Students of health professions
- Clinical vignettes describing Px with
  - Major depression episode (MDD), schizophrenia (SCH), alcohol dependence (SoA)

Ahmedani et al., 2011
Pescosolido et al, 2010

Addiction&Stigma_MR_2015
Informative science

- Neuroscientific view oversimplifies the complex phenomenon named addiction.  
  Hall et al., 2015

- Relationship between public perception of biological aspects of addiction and stigma are unclear.
  Racine et al., 2015
  - In public opinion: more social distance (=stigma)
  - Among mentally ill: more fear, self-guilt
  Rüsch et al., 2010
Range of philosophical, sociological, anthropological, psychological and neurobiological vocabularies synthesized in newer understandings.

Meurk et al., 2014
Take home messages

- Recognize one’s own attitudes and beliefs regarding alcohol (use).

- Recognize, understand and work through one’s own stigmatizing attitudes and beliefs.
Take home messages – cont’d

- Be a role model for your patients, students, friends...
- Avoid labeling.
- Help creating a safe environment to talk about difficult topics, taboos, stigma...
“Tales of Hope”

Editor:
Maja Rus-Makovec
ZGODBE UPANJA
eBesede, Ljubljana 2014
THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION!

radovanovic@psih-klinika.si