G3.2: The Severity of Addiction for Individuals Entering Therapeutic Community Treatment

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**Abstract:**
**Introduction:** Therapeutic communities (TCs) are residential settings that use a hierarchical model with treatment stages reflecting increased levels of personal and social responsibility. TCs for the treatment of drug addiction are designed to bring awareness to the attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors associated with drug use and to replace these thought patterns with healthy and productive ones. Individuals who complete at least 90 days of TC treatment have significantly better outcomes on average than those who stay for shorter periods. The aim of the current study was to describe the severity of drug addiction for individuals entering TC treatment.

**Method(s):** As part of a behavioral therapies trial of Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), the Addiction Severity Index (ASI) was used to collect baseline descriptive data on four hundred-nineteen participants in a typical TC. Data from one of six problem areas assessed with the ASI were analyzed.

**Results:** On average, TC residents began using drugs at 18 years of age. Participants had been treated for alcohol and drug addiction an average of 4 times prior to entering this highly structured, long-term treatment program. In the thirty days prior to entering the TC, residents reported spending an average of $1088 on alcohol and drugs. Thirty-seven percent of TC residents had never experienced a period of voluntary abstinence from their drug of choice since initiation. Participants who had experienced a period of voluntary abstinence reported an average of 10 days of sobriety which ended an average of 27 months prior to entering treatment.

**Discussion & Conclusions:** Individuals entering TC treatment tend to have a chronic relapsing pattern of addiction. Retention is particularly important for individuals with this level of disease severity. Individuals must stay in TC programs long enough to change behaviors and attitudes associated with drug use if they are to maintain sobriety. Finally, relapse prevention and comprehensive aftercare programs should be a significant part of the treatment plan for individuals in TC programs.

**Abstract History:**
This abstract has not been presented or accepted for presentation in whole or in part at the SNRS or other scientific meeting.

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