

Popularisation of Addictology: journalists' perceptions of the basic terminology, facts, and research results



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SUMMARY: *The Department of Addictology of the First Faculty of Medicine of Charles University in Prague and of the General Teaching Hospital in Prague (the former Centre for Addictology) has been investing considerable efforts in the popularisation of scientific and evidence-based outcomes in the field of addictology, both in terms of media content analysis and the active dissemination of popularised findings. Recent research shows that the media portrayal of drug issues seems to be set in a criminal context as a result of the media's unbalanced access to the relevant sources (such as addictologists, experts, and institutional representatives). As part of our current projects, we conducted a pilot survey among seven journalists from different types of mass media who specialise in the coverage of health-related issues. The journalists completed structured questionnaires aimed at exploring their background and knowledge in relation to the field of addictology. The journalists selected showed a limited understanding of the scope of the field of addictology. They either overestimated or underestimated the prevalence of both licit and illicit substance use and were not familiar with basic terminology pertaining to the field (misinterpretations of the terms "drug user" and "problem drug user" were found). The term "harm reduction" turned out to be completely unknown to them. On the other hand, the selected journalists were consistent and sensible in responding to value-loaded questions on drug policy interventions and were in favour of drug treatment being covered by health insurance.*

KEY WORDS: MEDIA – POPULARISATION OF SCIENTIFIC OUTCOMES – ADDICTOLOGY

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