

The Myth of Dependency Always Being a Chronic Disease



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BACKGROUND: In the past, dependency was considered as an inevitably chronic, lifelong disease. However, modern classifications, based on a medical model of the course of the disease and its clinical manifestations, define exactly when it is, and when it is not, present in an individual. Recent studies suggest that the life-time prevalence of dependency is higher than the point prevalence of dependency among the population. **AIM:** The objective of the study was to identify changes in the proportion of patients (first treatment demands) with a chronic course of dependence on alcohol, when the ICD-10/WHO is applied strictly. **PATIENTS AND METHODS:** Retrospective, descriptive, observational, clinical study of patients demanding treatment because of their dependency on alcohol at the Centre for Treatment of Drug Dependencies in Bratislava from 2002 to 2004. The sample comprised 1,417 diagnoses found in 1,260 patients; men and women accounted for 63% and

27%, respectively. Their age range was 14 to 76 years, with an average of 43 years. **Results:** When an older diagnostic approach was applied, 34.7% of the patients demanding treatment because of their dependency on alcohol were considered as relapsing, while the new diagnostic approach resulted in a proportion of 14.7% of such patients. The difference was statistically significant. **CONCLUSIONS:** Our findings from clinical samples of patients diagnosed with dependency on alcohol support the results of epidemiological studies carried out among the general population, which suggests that there may be more people who have overcome the disease, even without formal treatment, and have shown, for many years, sometimes for the rest of their lives, no clinical signs of dependency. This approach is progressive in terms of its diagnostic methodology and also has a major ethical and economic dimension.

KEY WORDS: DRUG POLICY – MEDICAL MODEL OF DEPENDENCY – EVIDENCE-BASED MEDICINE

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