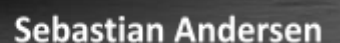


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<b>Forum</b>	World Health Organization
<b>Issue:</b>	Establishing new guidelines for addiction rehabilitation
<b>Student Officer:</b>	Sebastian Andersen
<b>Position:</b>	President

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## Introduction

Addictions are attested to in some of the earliest, still existing, sources. It has been an issue since the dawn of human beings, but yet it has taken a long time for humanity to start tackling the problem, which the hundreds of years without actions against addictions prove. Through history drugs such as Alcohol and Tobacco have enjoyed a high cultural approval, as one was not aware of the dangers these substances brought with them. In opposition to this, addicts of harder substances, which also had physical and mental symptoms of addictions, were often seen as sinners and as having a weak soul and personality. Till this day this stereotype has not vanished and is a reality, which people with addictions have to live with, even though it was declared a disease in 1987.

Nondependent on the historic hardships people suffering from addictions had to endure, drugs till this day destroy lives and endanger people. Firstly, addictions destroy the life of the victim, as their mental and physical health decreases drastically, they lose social ties with families and friends and they might even lose their ability to contribute to society. Secondly people suffering from addictions, which do not get the help they need, might be a danger to their closest ones and people in general, as many of those are not able to control their cravings and therefore would go very far to get into possession of the substance, which provides them with the wished sensation.

Establishing new global guidelines for the rehabilitation of addictions is so important, due to the fact that the treatment of people suffering from addictions is still insufficient and unacceptable in many parts of the world. New Guidelines would make it possible to exchange information and successes with other countries, thereby creating a system more efficient and humanitarian than ever before in human history.



## Definition of Key Terms

### Addiction

An addiction is a chronic medical disease. Individuals suffering from this disease crave various actions or substances, depending on the addiction, in order to feel a sensation of happiness. In these cases, individuals are often not aware of their current state or the harm they cause to themselves or others, due to the strong cravings. It involves complex interactions among brain circuits and genetics but is treatable.

### Addictive substance/action

This refers to a substance, such as alcohol or other drugs, or behaviour, such as gambling or gaming, that leads to repeated use or interactions despite possible negative consequences.

### Dopamine

Dopamine is a neurotransmitter, which creates the sensation of happiness in the human brain. It plays an important role in, for example, the reward system, memory, motivation and attention of humans.

### Reward system/reward path

The reward path/reward system is a part of the human brain, which evolutionarily served to reinforce behaviour that kept humans alive, such as for example hunting, which then was rewarded with the access to food. The reward system releases dopamine, which then leads to a pleasant feeling and the repetition of the conducted action.

### Tolerance

The sensations of tolerance occur when the brain gets overstimulated with dopamine on regular bases. In this case the brain will reduce the dopamine receptors, in order to deal with the high amount of dopamine. This leads to the need for more dopamine to create the sensation intended for. In addition to this the brain reduces its production of dopamine, thereby creating a need for the dopamine caused by addictive substances and actions to feel a sensation of happiness.

### Rehabilitation



The process of combating an addiction and recovering from the damages caused by the substances, to which the individual was addicted.

### **Detoxification**

Detoxification describes the process of slowly removing the substance, to which the individual is addicted, from the body, in order to reach a drug-free state and monitor the symptoms created by the withdrawal. This process is crucial for a successful rehabilitation.

### **Relapse Prevention**

Relapse Preventions are strategies and interventions designed to prevent the returning to abuse of substances, both during and especially after a rehabilitation process. An example for this is regular medical check-ups.

### **Behavioural Therapy**

This process describes the therapeutic approach to solving the problem of an addiction. It contains, among other things, a focus on modifying unhealthy behaviours and patterns connected with the individual's addiction. The aim of behavioural therapy is to promote positive changes and behaviours, develop coping mechanisms and prevent relapse.

### **Support groups**

Support groups are groups of people suffering from the same addiction, which are often led by a peer. The goal of such groups is to offer emotional support, encouragement and motivation, in addition to developing a sense of community, fostering a mutual understanding and sharing experiences, challenges and successes.

### **Harm reduction**

A philosophy focusing on the reduction of harm caused by the addiction, even if a complete abstinence is not initially achievable. Harm reduction is not limited to an individual suffering from addiction, but also focuses on the brought public, by means of education on the topics of addictions and overdoses.

### **Medication-Assisted treatment (MAT)**





A treatment consisting of behavioural therapy and medications, in order to combat cravings, manage withdrawal symptoms and to support individuals with long-term recoveries.

### Holistic Approach

An approach to addiction rehabilitation that consists of a focus on the individuals physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being. It incorporates various therapeutic methods, alternative therapies and lifestyle changes in order to achieve a successful recovery. Not all the methods, which are being used in this method, are scientifically proven.

## General Overview

In order to establish a complete overview of the situation it is important to consider the history of addictions and humans, the biological explanations for addictions and the possible consequences of addictions and a failure in the establishment of a proper rehabilitation system.

### Historic relationship between humans and addictions

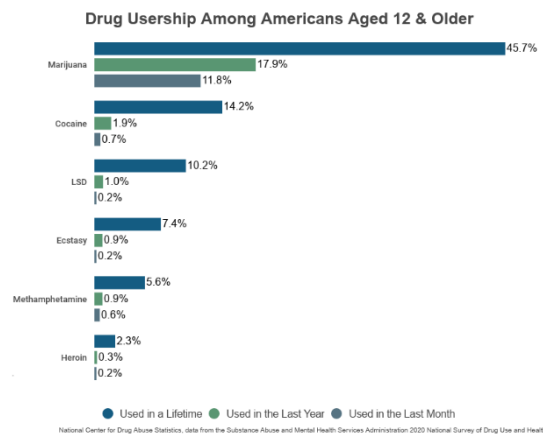
Addictions, the use of addictive substances and the conducting of addictive activities are attested to in the earliest human records. Substances with addictive powers have been used in various ways throughout history. For an example by priests during religious ceremonies or by healers in medical ways, such as to ease the pain of patients. But one of the most well-known examples is the use of alcohol. For a long time, alcohol was considered the only safe liquid for consumption, especially in Europe. This was due to the contamination of water by various diseases, thereby making it undrinkable. This led to a social acceptance of alcohol, which can be traced till this day. On the other hand, were the first discussions regarding the topic of addictions made in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It is proven that that these discussions already contained topics, which are still being discussed today. For an example if addiction is a sin or a disease. Whilst many would say it is a disease today, the idea of it being a sin and caused by the victim's weak mind still prevails.

### Biological explanation of addictions

Dopamine is a neurotransmitter, which is released from the reward path of the human brain. The reward path's primary function is to reinforce behaviour and actions, which keeps humans alive. It does this by releasing the dopamine, which then creates a pleasant feeling. However, when taking



substances or conducting actions, which are addicting, the reward path is hijacked by the substance and releases up to ten times as much dopamine. These come in addition to several other neurotransmitters that produce feelings of pleasure such as oxytocin, serotonin, and assorted endorphins. Therefore, nothing natural seems quite as rewarding anymore. Additionally some substances bind themselves to the receptors, thereby creating a similar effect. The brain also adapts to chronic use of addictive drugs or actions, as the sensitivity for dopamine falls, thereby creating the need for more, in order to produce the sensation of happiness. Furthermore, the brain also reduces its own dopamine production, leading to an even less rewarding natural experience. This all leads to the craving of more substances or action, depending on what the individual is addicted to, which then further destroys the body.



***Drug Usership depending on the substance  
in the age groups from 12 and older***

***“Substance Abuse and Addiction Statistics [2023].” NCDAS, 1 Jan. 2023, <https://drugabusestatistics.org/>.***

## Consequences

The consequences of addictions and the failure of an establishment of a proper rehabilitation system can be disastrous.

### Addictions

Depending on the kind of addiction multiple medical complications can be a consequence. Some of the well-known ones are for example lung cancer, when an individual



is addicted to smoking, or liver failure in the case of an alcohol addiction. A very universal addiction consequence is mental health problems, as the naturally produced dopamine cannot rival the dopamine, which is released into the brain by substances or actions. For example depressions are often the result of addictions, as the real world seems very unrewarding, compared to the high one gets from addictive substances or activities. Another thing that needs to be considered is the impact an addiction can have on others. The cravings of an individual with addictions can get so strong, that nothing else matters. This can lead to dangerous situations for the people close to the victim.

#### *Failure in the establishment of a proper rehabilitation system*

A failure in the establishment of proper guidelines and policies regarding the rehabilitation of addictions could be devastating, as addiction is a disease and should be treated as one. The failure to do so properly could lead to high numbers of invalids and even deaths. In addition to this it is also a question of the security of the society. As mentioned, people suffering from addictions can have very strong cravings, which can overgo their normal intuition and morals, thereby possibly endangering their closest or other people. Lastly, it would lead to a big gap in society, as people who suffer from addictions are in some cases not capable of working or contributing to society in other ways.

## Major Parties Involved

### World Health Organization (WHO)

As a United Nations agency the WHO is responsible for all international questions regarding global health. This means the issue of addictions does also fall under the responsibilities of this agency, which is then tasked with creating most effective policies and guidelines, based on the medical and scientific evidence. Furthermore, the WHO distributes technical support to member countries in order to establish an effective treatment and rehabilitation of individuals suffering from addictions.

### United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)



The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime is responsible for promoting global efforts to combat drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking. This organisation is crucial, as it works with countries to establish new guidelines, policies and practices to improve the rehabilitation system. In contrast to the WHO, the UNODC works to improve rehabilitation by focusing on harm prevention, for example by education, and the access to treatment for people suffering from addictions.

#### United Nations Development Program (UNDP)

The UNDP focuses on sustainable development, including addressing the social and economic dimensions of drug abuse and addiction. Therefore they cooperate with other organizations, such as the WHO and the UNODC, on establishing guidelines, in order to improve the rehabilitation system worldwide. In the case of the UNDP, this mostly happens by integrating it into broader development efforts, emphasizing community engagement, social inclusion and capacity building.

#### European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA)

The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction is an agency established by the European Union, in order to collect, analyse and disseminate information on drugs and drug addictions. With this data the EMCDDA then makes suggestions on new guidelines and policies in order to improve the addiction rehabilitation and harm reduction strategies, based on experience.

#### Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA)

The Substance Abuse and mental Health Service Administration is an Agency established by the United States Department of Health and Human Services. Its main tasks is to improve behavioural health service and provide guidance, resources and grants support to the development and implementation of effective addiction rehabilitation programs and policies.

### Timeline of Key Events

The timeline of addiction is shaped by ignorance. First the dangers of drugs are ignored and neglected. Afterwards those suffering from addictions are ignored or written of as weak minded people with no discipline:

Date	Description of event
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7000-6600 BC	Alcohol is invented
About 3300 BC	Ötzi, the man found in 1991, who approximately lived in 3300 BC carried a little bag fungi, proving the early use of drugs
13 <sup>th</sup> to 19 <sup>th</sup> century	With colonisation, drugs such as Tobacco and alcohol are spread all over the world
19 <sup>th</sup> century	The discovery of drugs for medical purposes increase the numbers of addictions
1875-1877	Edward Levison is the first to conduct studies on the dangers of addictions
20 <sup>th</sup> century	The number of people suffering from addictions increased drastically, especially after the world wars, as soldiers are often suffering from mental problems due to the horrors of war.
26 <sup>th</sup> of October 1901	The first convention on the dangers of drug addiction is held in Shanghai
1912	The first treaty on the regulation of drug trade is signed in the Hague
1965	Alcoholism is considered a illness
18 <sup>th</sup> of June 1971	"The war on drugs" was declared by the American president Richard Nixon. After this declaration the measures against drug trade intensified. The sector of rehabilitation does not profit majorly from this.
1985	Addiction is considered an illness
From 1985	Countries deal with the illness on a national scale

## UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

Many previous resolutions, treaties and involvement, regarding the topic and rehabilitation, have consisted of the limitation of access to substances or activities, which might be addictive :

- The shanghai Opium Commission, 26<sup>th</sup> of October 1909
- The International Opium Convention of the Hague, 1912
- International Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, 7<sup>th</sup> of December 1987 (A/RES/42/112)
- Global strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol, May 2010 (WHA63.13)

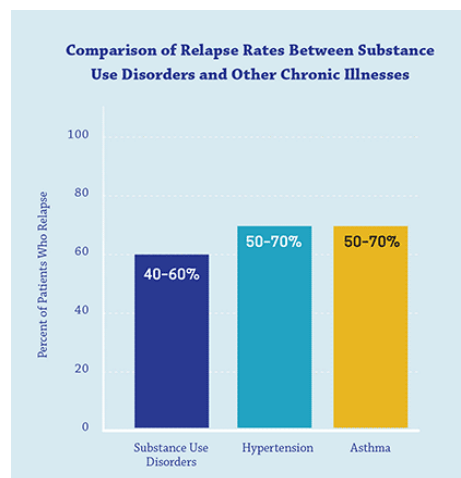
## Previous Attempts to solve the Issue



Previous attempts on solving the issue have mostly consisted of trying to limit the ability of substances or activities, which might lead to addictions. The issue of solving the problems of addiction and establishing the guidelines regarding these topics have for a long time been a national matter. Especially in countries, which are less economically developed, this has created problems, as they do not always have the resources to conduct research on the matter, to establish programmes for rehabilitation or to inform people about these programmes. This has led to serious defects in many rehabilitation systems in the world.

## Possible Solutions

A possible first guideline, is one concerning the standard for rehabilitation programmes and the programmes following these. For example, would the establishment of guidelines regarding the quality of the medicine and therapy be of high importance, as it sets an international standard for the complete treatment based on science and medical experience. In addition to this, one should consider a minimum amount of medical or therapeutic check-ups after finishing treatment, in order to prevent relapses.



**Comparison of Relapse Rates Between Substance use Disorder and other Chronic Illnesses, proving the high danger of relapse**

**Eldridge, Ellen. "It's the Most Important Part of Addiction Recovery - and Often the Most Difficult to Access." Georgia Public Broadcasting, [www.gpb.org/news/2022/08/04/its-the-most-important-part-of-addiction-recovery-and-often-the-most-difficult](http://www.gpb.org/news/2022/08/04/its-the-most-important-part-of-addiction-recovery-and-often-the-most-difficult). Accessed 19 July 2023.**



Guidelines regarding harm reduction, by means of education, should also be considered. With an internationally decided minimum of education for both those suffering from addictions and the brought public, regarding the topic of addiction and rehabilitation. Such education could give those suffering from addictions general knowledge, regarding the treatment they might endure. In addition to this a certain amount of understanding would be installed in the public, thereby guaranteeing support for the programmes. Such education programmes could focus on the MAT or the evidence-based approach.

The establishment of an international organisation, to monitor and report the current situation, focusing on the evolution of the drug market, new medical and therapeutic possibilities and the general evolution of rehabilitation. This could be beneficial, as it makes it possible for other organisations, like the WHO, to have professional advice and reports, which would increase the efficacy of the decisions made by these organs. Such an organisation could also check and improve national addiction rehabilitation systems.

Furthermore, guidelines ensuring the cooperation between different services, such as addiction treatment centres, social welfare organizations, mental health services and shelter organizations, could be beneficial, as considerations with multiple points of view can bring new experiences and ideas, regarding the solution of the issue. The involvement of the community should also be considered.

Lastly, international cooperation is important, as not all countries have the resources to conduct research or establish programmes, which are meant to help people suffering from addictions. Therefore it is important that countries work together, share experience and research and help each other with the establishment of programmes.

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## Appendix or Appendices

- i. A website with numerous statistics on addictions in the US:  
<https://drugabusestatistics.org/>
- ii. Detailed Report by the UNODC on addiction treatment and rehabilitation:  
[https://www.unodc.org/lpomex/uploads/documents/Publicaciones/Drogas/UNODC\\_Drug\\_Abuse\\_Treatment\\_and\\_Rehabilitation\\_2003.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/lpomex/uploads/documents/Publicaciones/Drogas/UNODC_Drug_Abuse_Treatment_and_Rehabilitation_2003.pdf)



