Rediscovering Alcoholism, Addiction & Dependence

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Then in 2005…

How can we explain?

- Subjects may not tell truth
- Snapshots of time may distort picture
- Our paradigms may be wrong
- We may be suffering from paradigm confusion
Can they return to low-risk drinking?

It has long been known that many people with serious alcohol problems are able to return to low-risk drinking.

Perhaps paradigm confusion kept us from explaining it in a helpful way.
Can they return to low-risk drinking?

What is Alcoholics Anonymous’ View?

“...we have a certain type of hard drinker. He may have the habit badly enough to gradually impair him physically and mentally. It may cause him to die a few years before his time. ”

Alcoholics Anonymous, page 20-21
Can they return to low-risk drinking?

What is Alcoholics Anonymous’ View?

"If a sufficiently strong reason—ill health, falling in love, change of environment becomes operative...this man can stop or moderate, although he may find it difficult and troublesome and may even need medical attention. …But what about the real alcoholic?"

Alcoholics Anonymous, page 20-21
Can they return to low-risk drinking?

Jellinek’s View

“Not all excessive drinkers, even after many years of habitual drinking, develop ‘loss of control.’”
Can they return to low-risk drinking?

For lack of a better term people called this group:

- Problem Drinkers
- Abusers
How should we respond?

Should we “cherry pick” the findings most compatible with our own paradigm?

Or clarify our paradigms?
Fuzzy paradigms...

Create puzzles...
Clear paradigms…

…provide answers.

addiction  dependence  alcoholism
Addiction

Evolution:

• Initially referred to the presence of a withdrawal syndrome when use was stopped.

• As it evolved it referred more to a pattern of compulsive use, loss of control over use, and often included negative consequences.
Addiction

“...a chronically relapsing disorder characterized by compulsion to seek and take the drug, loss of control in limiting intake, and emergence of a negative emotional state (e.g. dysphoria, anxiety, and irritability) when access to the drug is prevented.”

Koob and LeMoal, 2008
Central Tenets…

- Characterized by loss of control
- Progressive
- Irreversible
“But what about the real alcoholic? He may start off as a moderate drinker; he may or may not become a continuous hard drinker; but at some stage of his drinking career he begins to lose all control of his liquor consumption, once he starts to drink.”

*Alcoholics Anonymous*, page 20

AA was founded in 1935
• In 1941, E.M. Jellinek & Bowman published a review of prevailing concepts of alcoholism.

• In 1982, Mark Keller stated:

  “they designated (alcoholism) by alcohol addiction. For the latter choice they had the best of reasons: all the expert descriptions converged on addiction...”

*Alcohol, Science and Society Revisited*
Jellinek Further Refined the Concept

- Surveyed members of AA about their experiences
- Established a sequence of events that he expanded on in his book *The Disease Concept of Alcoholism*

Paradigms Defined

Development of Jellinek Curve by Glatt (1958)
The word then fell into common usage, and its meaning changed.

"The word became common...and thereby experienced the fate of many ordinary words: It was made more and more useful. Its meaning was popularly enriched—and thereby technically impoverished. It ceased to be solely a diagnostic term for a condition identified by specifiable symptoms. And popular usage is not without influence on professionals."

Mark Keller
The word then fell into common usage, and its meaning changed.

"The term came to be applied to pre-alcoholismic behaviors...sometimes (applied to) people who would never make it into alcoholism, (and applied) to manifest troubles with drinking which have always been common in young people during the stage between adolescence and settling down; to heavy drinking, excessive drinking, deviant drinking and unpopular drinking."

Mark Keller
Paradigms Defined

The word then fell into common usage, and its meaning changed.

“Referring to the fact that some people ‘who never become addicted’ were being labeled as alcoholics, Jellinek wrote:

‘In order to do justice to these ... differences, we have termed as alcoholism any use of alcoholic beverages that causes any damage to the individual or society or both.’

Five lines later on the same page, he added: ‘such a vague definition is useless.’”

Mark Keller