

„This treatment can really help me“ – A longitudinal analysis of treatment readiness and its predictors in patients undergoing alcohol and drug rehabilitation treatment

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Introduction: There is evidence that patients entering alcohol or drug treatment have different levels of treatment motivation which changes differently over time. Nonetheless, existing studies mainly use single baseline measures of motivation and do not consider individual differences. The present study extends previous research by addressing two questions: (1) How does treatment readiness change in patients with alcohol and drug use disorders over the course of treatment, and (2) Do sociodemographic and substance use related characteristics predict treatment readiness?

Methods: Data from n=329 alcohol and drug dependent patients were collected in two in-patient rehabilitation centers. Three single-item indicators of treatment readiness were assessed weekly over the course of the treatment. Sociodemographic and substance use related characteristics were assessed at baseline. In order to model developments of treatment readiness that may be different for each patient, multilevel analyses for longitudinal data were used.

Results: With regard to all three indicators of treatment readiness, average motivation across all patients did not change over the course of the treatment. However, individuals showed different baseline states and different rates of change over time. Employment status, the number of earlier substance use treatments and craving significantly predicted treatment readiness. Interactions between primary substance (alcohol vs. drugs) and time as well as gender and time were not significant.

Conclusion: The results suggest that it is necessary to consider individual differences when evaluating treatment motivation in alcohol and drug patients. The identification of variables predicting motivation may help to improve substance abuse treatment contents and outcomes.

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