

2014 EMCDDA Scientific Paper Award

Der EMCDDA Scientific Paper Award wird seit 2011 für herausragende wissenschaftliche Arbeiten zum Konsum psychoaktiver Substanzen verliehen. Dieses Jahr waren 64 Publikationen nominiert. Die Jury setzte sich zusammen aus Mitgliedern des EMCDDA Scientific Committee, der International Society of Addiction Journal Editors (ISAJE), weiteren angesehenen Suchtforschern sowie erfahrenen wissenschaftlichen Leitern der EMCDDA.

Preisträger 2014 ist eine Publikation von zwölf europäischen Suchtforschern unter Leitung von **Jürgen Rehm**. Die Publikation wurde im Rahmen des EU Projekts *Addiction and Lifestyles in Contemporary Europe Reframing Addictions Project* (ALICE RAP) erstellt und argumentiert für eine Neudefinition des Konzepts "Substanzbezogene Störungen". Die bisherige überwiegend dichotome Sichtweise wird aufgegeben zugunsten eines Kontinuums „Heavy Use Over Time“.

Rehm, J., Marmet, S., Anderson, P., Gual, A., Kraus, L., Nutt, D. J., Room, R., Samokhvalov, A. V., Scafato, E., Trapencieris, M., Wiers, R. W. & Gmel, G. (2013). Defining substance use disorders: do we really need more than heavy use? *Alcohol and Alcoholism*, 48 (6), 633-640.

<http://alcalc.oxfordjournals.org/content/48/6/633.long>

Presstext der Preisvergabe in Lissabon vom 25. November 2014:



EMCDDA Scientific Paper Award

PRESS RELEASE

25 November 2014, Lisbon, Portugal

Addictions – It’s all about “heavy use over time”

EMCDDA award 2014 goes to ALICE-RAP paper calling for a radical redefinition of substance use disorders.

Twelve European scientists working in the EC-funded ALICE-RAP project were awarded a prestigious EMCDDA 2014 Scientific Paper Prize today. Their award winning paper, ‘Defining substance use disorders: Do we really need more than heavy use?’, published in the journal *Alcohol and Alcoholism* last year ,argues that re-defining substance use disorders as “heavy use over time” could revolutionize the work of scientists and clinicians and bring important benefits for society and those suffering from “addictions”.

“Heavy use over time is a more practical and scientifically valid way to define what we know of as ‘substance use disorders’ or ‘addiction’ than the current DSM-5 and ICD definitions”, notes lead author Jürgen Rehm from Technische Universität Dresden in Germany and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in Toronto, Canada.

“This new definition could also reduce the stigma and discrimination currently associated with substance use problems, because when we view use as a continuous measure, rather than a dichotomous definition such as “addict” and “non-addict”, it is more difficult to label people as either ‘us’ or ‘them’.”

After reviewing recent clinical and epidemiological data, the authors concluded that heavy use of psychoactive substances over a period of time underlies all the relevant changes in the brain and other physiological phenomena (such as intoxication, withdrawal and tolerance) common to definitions of ‘substance abuse disorders’. In addition, heavy use of substances over time is closely associated with the main social consequences of ‘addictions’ (such as neglecting of social roles, preoccupation with a substance, violence etc.) and is also responsible for the major part of the substance-attributable burden of diseases and mortality.

For decades, clinicians, researchers and health planners have been struggling to discuss and collaborate on the problems of ‘addiction’ or ‘substance use disorders’ without being able to agree on a common definition of the terms or concepts. There is a wide spectrum of ways in which society conceptualizes ‘addictions’, with opinions coming from lay persons, media sources, academics, politicians and clinicians. Indeed, there is a split between the two clinical systems to define addiction (ICD and DSM) which are increasingly drifting farther apart in their definitions, showing that there is no agreement about this term even within a single professional group. Part of the problem stems from the fact that current definitions rely on identifying characteristics such as ‘loss of control’ in individuals suffering from ‘addiction’, and these behaviours may be perceived very differently in different countries and cultures.

“This new definition of heavy use over time”, note the authors of the paper, “ better fits the empirical data and will eliminate many of the current problems with definitions and operationalization.”

Contact

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The EMCCMA Scientific Paper award was inaugurated in 2011 by the EMCDDA Scientific Committee. It celebrates scientific writing and distinguishes high-quality research in the field of illicit drugs. This year, a record 64 papers were nominated by members of the Scientific Committee, the Reitox national focal points, European drug research peer-reviewed journals and by EMCDDA staff. The jury was composed of members of the Scientific Committee, the International Society of Addiction Journal Editors (ISAJE), other acknowledged scientists in the drugs field and EMCDDA senior scientific staff.

The ALICE RAP project (Addiction and Lifestyles in Contemporary Europe – Reframing Addictions Project) brings together a network of over 150 researchers who study many different aspects of addiction from a wide range of different disciplines. The network of scientists involved in the project includes some of the most renowned researchers in Europe from a wide variety of disciplines, ranging from biomedical fields which look at addiction, such as neurobiology, to economics, market forces, clinical services and social impact of addictive behaviour. For more information please see www.alicerap.eu.