

Prevention of Alcohol Addiction

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Prevention has the name to be much more important than treatment and our efforts should move from the treatment of endstage disorders to the prevention and treatment of risk factors, the early identification of prodromes and the treatment of early stages of the disease. With regard to alcohol, most preventive actions have been directed to the postponement of early alcohol use in youngsters through price and alcohol availability measures, mass media campaigns, school programs and neighbourhood interventions. Most of these programs have shown small and transient effects on alcohol use initiation, but very few have shown relevant effects on the prevention of alcohol addiction. Recently more attention has been given to the role of parents in the postponement of alcohol use, but again very little is known about the effects on the prevention of alcohol addiction. It should be noted that twin studies have shown that alcohol use is strongly associated with shared environmental factors, whereas alcohol addiction is mainly determined by genetic factors and unique environmental factors. These findings suggest that not much can be expected from universal prevention programs in the prevention of alcohol addiction and that our efforts should be refocused on selective prevention, indicated prevention and the recognition of early stages of alcohol addiction. This presentation will discuss the most important target groups for selective prevention and the possibilities for indicated prevention and early recognition and treatment of early stages of alcohol addiction.