



Continuing care and early recovery from addiction

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OVERVIEW

- This study sought to better understand the relationship between continuing care and abstinence following inpatient addiction treatment.
- Researchers found that involvement in continuing care activities enhance recovery outcomes.
- These findings highlight the importance of continuing care planning in clinical practice.

WHAT IS THIS RESEARCH ABOUT?

In the field of addiction medicine, continuing care refers to a range of services designed to support individuals after a period of intensive treatment.

Also known as aftercare or recovery management, continuing care can include professional outpatient services (e.g., group counselling or individual therapy) and community-based services, such as mutual self-help groups (e.g., 12-Step groups).

The goal of this research was to study the relationship between continuing care services and early abstinence among patients who completed inpatient treatment for substance use disorders.

WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS DO?

Researchers collected data from 379 patients in the Addiction Medicine Service, an inpatient treatment program

at Homewood Health Centre in Guelph, Ontario. Data were collected as part of the Recovery Journey Project, a study examining the long-term recovery outcomes of addiction treatment (recoveryjourneyproject.com).

Patients completed questionnaires about various aspects of their recovery, including substance use and involvement in continuing care activities. The questionnaires were completed upon entry to the program and again at one and/or three months after completing the program.

Analyses were conducted to determine whether involvement in continuing care was related to abstinence.

WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS FIND?

Overall, involvement in continuing care activities enhanced patient outcomes.

Patients who participated in 12-Step activities or professional outpatient addiction services were at least twice as likely to report being abstinent compared to those who did not pursue continuing care. They also reported up to a 20% increase in the percentage of days they were abstinent over a 30-day period.

Findings also suggested there were benefits to engaging in more than one 12-Step activity. Having a sponsor, doing service work, and attending 30 meetings in 30 days were particularly important in promoting abstinence.

RESEARCH SNAPSHOT

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

This research highlights the importance of continuing care in promoting abstinence during early recovery. These findings can be used to guide care for those receiving addiction treatment.

To the extent that services are accessible and engaging to patients, clinical teams should encourage participation in mutual support groups and professional outpatient services to optimize treatment outcomes.

VIEW THE FULL ARTICLE

Costello, MJ., Li, Y., Remers, S., MacKillop, J., Sousa, S., Ropp, C., Roth, D., Weiss, M., & Rush, B. (2019). Effects of 12-step mutual support and professional outpatient services on short-term substance use outcomes among adults who receive inpatient treatment. *Addictive Behaviors*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2019.106055>

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KEYWORDS

Substance use disorders; continuing care; mutual support groups; 12-Step; outpatient support; treatment outcomes

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