

THE CLINICAL IMPACT OF THE BRAIN DISEASE MODEL OF ADDICTION: A MIXED-METHODS STUDY EXPLORING AOD TREATMENT PROVIDERS' ATTITUDES

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Introduction and Aims: Despite strong advocacy for the brain disease model of addiction (BDMA) from policy makers particularly in the United States, it remains uncertain to what extent addiction treatment providers support the BDMA, and how they view its impact on clinical practice. This study explores Australian and international treatment providers' attitudes towards: (i) the BDMA and its impact on clinical practice; and (ii) neuroscientific understandings of addiction and their relevance for treatment.

Method / Approach: The study adopts a mixed-methods approach by conducting interviews with treatment providers followed by an international survey of treatment providers' attitudes.

Key Findings: Initial results indicate that whilst certain treatment providers believed the BDMA may have a positive clinical impact for clients (e.g., decreased stigma), others raised concerns about potential negative clinical impacts (e.g., an increased sense of helplessness). Although many treatment providers rejected the BDMA arguing it ignores social and environmental factors, they believed that neuroscientific understandings of addiction remained relevant for practice and informed various therapeutic interventions (e.g., pharmacotherapies).

Discussions and Conclusions: Our results indicate that there may be a disjuncture between strong support for the BDMA expressed by leaders of US research institutes and the attitudes of treatment providers about the impact of the BDMA for clinical practice.

Implications for Practice or Policy: Our findings will elucidate treatment provider attitudes about the potential positive and negative implications of the BDMA for practice.

Implications for Translational Research: Despite a large investment in addiction neuroscience research globally, there has been a widely acknowledged failure to translate research findings into new treatments of benefit for addicted persons. Our study explores the views of treatment providers about the relevance of neuroscience for practice to identify opportunities for knowledge translation.

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