



## Editorial

### Addiction: A Runaway Phenomenon of Our Time?

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Is addiction a runaway phenomenon of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? The answer depends on the definitions we use. Addiction is a common term referring to behaviors of a compulsive, consuming nature that an individual has difficulty relinquishing despite its adverse consequences to oneself and others. However, in the Diagnostic Statistical Manual- IV-TR, addiction is not a diagnostic category [1]. Substance abuse and dependency are classified under Substance Abuse Disorders while other compulsive behaviors, such as pathological gambling and kleptomania, are currently classified as Impulse Control Disorders. A Task Force is considering the addition of Addiction and Related Disorders to the DSM-V that will encompass both substance use disorders and non-substance addictions [2].

Shaffer proposed that addiction can be thematically categorized along three broad clusters of symptoms using the 3 C's: craving and compulsion, loss of control, and persistence of behaviors despite negative consequences, parallel to criteria found for substance dependency and pathological gambling [3]. Establishing a nomenclature and criteria for a phenomenon enhances our capacity to recognize and define its presence.

Our attention to different types of addiction shifts over time. Historical attention to addiction has focused on the effects of alcoholism and drug use, and more so on illegal than legal drugs. The health harms and burdens associated with abuse of tobacco and prescription drugs have now come to the fore [4,5]. In the last decade, pathological gambling has developed a strong research base in the wake of worldwide legalized gambling and concerns over its health and social impacts. Increasingly, addiction professionals and the public are recognizing that other compulsive behaviors bear similarities to drug and alcohol dependency and are raising questions about whether internet, computer or video games, sex, love passion, buying, tanning, and over-eating can be legitimately considered addictive behaviors [6-12]. Further studies are needed to ascertain whether the phenomenology, clinical symptoms, psychological mechanisms, childhood history, family addiction history, comorbidities, genetics, neurobiology, and epidemiology of these contemporary compulsive behaviors fall in line with substance use disorders, and can be considered as manifestations of a larger syndrome, or whether they are more aligned with impulse control disorders or obsessive-compulsive disorders [2]. It has been suggested that even war and corporations in a hyper-capitalistic era breed and reflect addictive behaviors in a pathological culture [13,14].

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Based on a systematic review of the literature on a range of 11 substance and process "addictions", (tobacco, alcohol, illicit drugs, eating, gambling, Internet, love, sex, exercise, work, and shopping), Sussman and his colleagues estimate that 47% of the U.S. adult population suffer from maladaptive signs of an addictive disorder over a 12-month period [15]. In *The Globalization of Addiction*, Bruce Alexander sounds the alarm to the insidious non-drug related addictions and their destructive effects in morbidity, mortality and dehumanization [16]. He notes that the prevalence of addiction, beyond drug and alcohol, is large and growing worldwide. Indirect indications of this can be seen in revenues generated by computer games and game companies, pornography websites and products, escalating violence and human degradation associated with pornography, and the rise of clinical depression, a comorbid condition in substance use disorders and pathological gambling [17-23].

If addiction in its broad manifestations is indeed spinning out of control, what are the causes and remedies of this intractable problem? Depending on one's orientation, etiologies can be understood within a neurobiological framework or within the realm of the psychology of cognitions, behaviors, and of human existence. Familial, social and ecological frameworks are less prominent, but important. We must promote research on the interactions between addictive behaviors and its familial, social and cultural environment. Technology, communication, the demise of religious institutions, the family and community, mass migrations and dislocations, growing inequalities of wealth, and hyper-capitalism with its aggrandizing campaigns to promote insatiable consumption have taxed human capacities for finding meaning, worth, security, and fulfillment. An interdisciplinary effort is urgently needed to understand the complexity of addiction in the context of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The *Journal of Addictive Behaviors, Therapy, and Rehabilitation* invites research and reports on therapy and rehabilitation for behavioral addictions. Research into what constitutes recovery and rehabilitation, the trajectory of recovery and the signs and impacts of different recovery stages on addictive behaviors, personal integration, and on family members will be of great value [24,25]. Answers to these questions will deepen our understanding of the recovery and rehabilitation process and the interventions and supports that need to be installed for each stage of this journey. To date, the evidence-base for the treatment of addiction has been largely built on cognitive-behavioral methods. Broadening the philosophical and theoretical base of what underlies addiction can lead to varied and expanded treatment models and tests of their effectiveness, thereby enlivening the options for therapy to include humanistic, existential, and integrative relational systems models [26,27].

The intriguing observation that addiction is a runaway phenomenon extending its reach beyond substance use to other behaviors that affect increasingly large segments of the population, especially in the developed world, rightly deserves a new journal. The *Journal of Addictive Behaviors, Therapy and Rehabilitation* provides a timely platform for your findings, interpretations. We hope that this new journal will advance knowledge on the scope of addiction,

both in its forestallment and remedies, in this dangerous time of accelerated change.

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