

ADDICTION IN THE LIFE COURSE PERSPECTIVE

— entry and exit processes

A thematic meeting of the Kettil Bruun Society for Social and Epidemiological
Research on Alcohol

15–19 October 2002, Stockholm, Sweden

We are far from a full understanding about which people become addicted and the processes responsible for this. Even though we know that certain cultural, social, individual, and biological factors may predispose a person to addictive behaviors, many people with similar risk factors never develop a dependence.

The complex web of influences that may guide people out of their addictions is even less well understood. Certain factors have been shown to facilitate the change, yet at the same time many individuals with an excellent prognosis still seem to fail in their efforts to recover. What factors or experiences contribute to these highly variable developmental trajectories are still largely unknown.

Thus far, research has generally focused on either of these two ends of the addiction process, but seldom has tried to connect them. Biographical research, however, points to the necessity to also consider this connection.

Consequently, the aim of this thematic meeting of the Kettil Bruun Society is to examine **addictive behaviors from the life course perspective**. We are interested in both objective factors and subjective experiences that predispose or pave the way for addictive behaviors, as well as factors and experiences facilitating recovery from addiction. The main focus will be on alcohol and drug addictions, but studies dealing with other “excessive appetites” are also welcome.

This meeting continues the KBS research tradition on the natural history of addictive behaviors. The focus here would be broader than in our previous meetings in the sense that both entry and exit processes are included. Yet it would also be more specific in the sense that we are interested in certain lines of research in this area. Particularly relevant for this meeting would, therefore, be the following basic themes or lines of research:

First, we would like to welcome both qualitative and quantitative studies based on the *biographical and life history approach to the development of addictive behaviors*. In addition to the more traditional search for discrete and interacting causal factors contributing to the initiation of addictive behaviors, we are also interested in narrative accounts on this issue. After all, human destinies may to a large extent depend on the narrative and interpretative capacities of individuals and groups. New avenues for understanding addiction could, therefore, be opened up by such qualitative studies.

Once established, addiction may take different courses. In some cases the developmental course of addiction spirals down at an ever faster rate, in other cases the condition seems to fluctuate or stay more or less stable, and in still others, people seem to recover, sometimes even without trying. How can we explain and make sense of the *different developmental trajectories* in addictive behaviors, is another topic relevant for this meeting.

Thirdly, even though heavy use of psychoactive substances may inflict close to permanent changes in the central nervous system of addicted individuals, some of them, nevertheless, manage to quit either with or without treatment. What renders these changes possible? Both qualitative and quantitative studies on the *ways out of addictive behaviors and factors contributing to recovery* are, therefore, also welcome.

The answers we get to our questions about what contributes to and guides people out of addiction are dependent upon how we define the very concept of addiction. In addition, we know that prevailing popular and scientific images may partly serve as self-fulfilling prophecies, both in involving people further in the addictive cycle and in helping them to find a path out. Since these conceptions differ over times and places, our understanding of the phenomena we are interested in, and our ways of interpreting research results need to be put into the perspective of these broader, social-historical realities. For this reason we also welcome studies dealing with the *conceptual basis of addiction and its historical development*.

For each of the above mentioned themes, we have invited key note speakers. We are happy to announce that the introductory lectures will be given by professor **Jim Orford**, School of Psychology, The University of Birmingham (UK), professor **George E. Vaillant**, Division of Psychiatry, Brigham and Women's Hospital, (Boston, USA) professor **Jalie A. Tucker**, UAB School of Public Health, University of Alabama (USA), and professor **Bruce K. Alexander**, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby (CAN).

We hope to be able to publish papers (and results) from the meeting in a publication in 2003.

Call for papers

All participants are expected to prepare an informative abstract (maximum 200 words) proposing a paper to be presented and discussed at the conference. The abstract should be submitted by **April 30, 2002** together with the registration form. Participation at the conference is limited and preference will be given to abstracts that are most central to themes of the conference.

Acceptance of papers and attendance, together with further information about payment, hotel reservations and social program around the conference, will be sent by the end of June 2002.

To maximize time at the conference for discussion, papers will be precirculated on a website for conference participants prior to the conference. Accepted papers are due by the **end of August 2002**. At the same time the conference fee of Euro 285 (approximately 250 US \$) should be paid.

The fee includes lodging and partial board (breakfasts, coffees and lunches) during the conference. Scholars without access to institutional resources may apply for support to attend the meeting. To apply for such support, send a request with a budget of total estimated expenses specifying the portion for which support is requested, by April 30, 2002.

Please send your registration forms, abstracts etc. to:

Nordic Council for Alcohol and Drug Research (NAD)
Annankatu 29 A 23, FIN-00100 Helsinki, Finland

Fax: +358 9 694 90 81, e-mail: nads@kaapeli.fi

OR use the registration form at NAD:s homepage www.kaapeli.fi/nad

Conference site

(Please note that the conference site has changed!)

The conference will be held in a former prison, today a nicely renovated conference center called the Långholmen Hotel and Conference Center in Stockholm, Sweden. Additional information can be found on www.langholmen.com.

Organizers

The conference will be hosted by the Nordic Council for Alcohol and Drug Research (NAD), Helsinki. Information on NAD can be found on www.kaapeli.fi/nad.

The conference is a thematic meeting of the Kettil Bruun Society for Social and Epidemiological Research on Alcohol.

Further information can be obtained from the local organizing committee:

Anja Koski-Jännes
Department of Social Sciences
University of Kuopio
FIN-70211 Kuopio, Finland

E-mail: anja.koski-jannes@uku.fi, anja.koski-jannes@a-klinikka.fi

Jan Blomqvist
Research & Development (FoU)
Social Services Administration
SE-106 64 Stockholm, Sweden

E-mail: jan.blomqvist@sot.stockholm.se

Leif Öjesjö
Department of Clinical Neuroscience
Magnus Huss Clinic, Karolinska Institute
SE-171 76 Stockholm, Sweden

E-mail: leif.ojesjo@stockholm.bonet.se

Pia Rosenqvist
Nordic Council for Alcohol and Drug Research (NAD)
Annankatu 29 A 23
FIN-00100 Helsinki, Finland

E-mail: pia@kaapeli.fi