
Preface I

From the President of the American Society for Addiction Medicine

Recent Developments in Alcoholism has been an important contribution to the literature in Addiction Medicine for almost two decades. It is a bit ironic that this year's anthology addresses not one of the recent "new" things in recovery, but one of the oldest: the ability of active participation in Alcoholics Anonymous and other related peer-assisted recovery activities to help initiate or sustain recovery. It is not "new" that AA, NA, Al-anon and the like are available in communities around America and around the world or that thousands if not millions of persons in recovery have attributed to AA a major role in their recoveries. And it is not "new" that AA is, indeed, not "professional help" and should never be considered "treatment" by any patient, family member, public policy maker, insurance company or managed care utilization reviewer.¹ What is a recent development is that it is no longer appropriate to say "there is no evidence about what AA is or how helpful it may be" or that "evidence-based medicine includes pharmacotherapies and specific professional counseling interventions as reported through randomized clinical trials, but it excludes peer-assisted recovery activities." The R. Brinkley Smithers Distinguished Scientist Award granted at the ASAM Medical Scientific Conference in 2007 honored the work of one of the co-editors of this volume, Lee Ann Kaskutas, Dr.P.H., of the School of Public Health of the University of California-Berkeley, examining effectiveness literature on AA and the role of spirituality in addiction and recovery.

Much of health care is showing increasing interest in not only the bio-psycho-social aspects of many health conditions, but the role of spirituality in recovery from illness. The addiction field can lead the way for the rest of medicine in uncovering insights about this essential aspect of human

¹ *Relationship Between Treatment and Self Help: A Joint Statement of the American Society of Addiction Medicine, the American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry and the American Psychiatric Association. Adopted 1997.*

experience. This volume includes important articles by Dr. Kaskutas and many other academicians to expand our knowledge base and to serve as an important compilation of contemporary thought and data. Related topics, such as the role of mindfulness meditation in recovery, are also addressed. As scientists such as Richard Davidson, Ph.D. of the University of Wisconsin HealthEmotions Research Institute, learn more about the neurobiology of emotion and the neurophysiologic changes that occur with meditation, we get closer to understanding the neurobiology of recovery itself, which will likely be shown through neuroimaging studies to be affected by peer-assisted activities and other "self-help" activities such as participation in 12-step groups.

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Research on Alcoholics Anonymous and Spirituality in
Addiction Recovery

The Twelve-Step Program Model Spiritually Oriented
Recovery Twelve-Step Membership Effectiveness and
Outcome Research

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