

PSYCHOLOGY AND ADDICTION SPECIAL SECTION EDITORIAL

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This Special Section of the *New Zealand Journal of Psychology* provides a focus on addiction. While for most practicing psychologists addiction issues may not be the primary focus of their work, it is relevant to their practice in most cases. Substance use is widespread in the community (Wells et al. 2007), with hazardous use of alcohol particularly common (Adamson & Wells, 2009). Furthermore psychologists have played an important role in the understanding of addiction and developing many of the leading therapies for these issues.

Addiction and mental health issues co-exist at high rates in New Zealand, as elsewhere (Todd, 2010). Three quarters of patients in specialist alcohol and drug clinics also experience a current co-existing Axis I psychiatric disorder (Adamson et al 2006), while the rate of substance misuse in the general community is found to be three to four times higher in those with anxiety or mood disorders (Scott, 2007). Substance misuse may significantly impact on a wide range of issues of interest to psychologists in addition to mental health conditions, including educational attainment (Horwood et al, 2010), relationship functioning (Fergusson & Boden, 2008), neuropsychological functioning (Sebly & Azrin, 1998), and criminal offending (Dittmann, 1996).

A treatment modality for co-existing posttraumatic stress disorder and substance use problems is evaluated in Benton et al (2012). Not only does this paper provide an example of a common

co-occurring combination it also provides a careful examination of some of the ways in which these problems may interact and demonstrates that treatment working with both conditions concurrently can be successful.

McLachlan and Starkey (2012) found significant rates of co-occurring problems in their sample while Faisandier & Taylor (2012) also examine what arguable could be considered two inter-related problem areas: attachment disruption and out of control sexual behaviour. The nature of any possible causal relationship between these two phenomena is discussed in light of their findings of an association.

These papers demonstrate two important areas where psychologists can make a contribution to our understanding of addiction: developing theory pertinent to the etiology and phenomenology of addictive phenomena (see also McLachlan & Starkey, 2012), and the development of efficacious treatments for those conditions.

There is a long and rich history of psychologists developing effective treatments in the addiction field. Consider the following list, which is not exhaustive: motivational interviewing (Miller & Rollnick, 2002), social and behavioural network therapy (Copello et al., 2002) and family interventions more generally (Copello et al 2000; McCrady & Epstein, 1995), the transtheoretical model of change (Prochaska and DiClemente, 1983), and relapse prevention (Marlatt & Gordon, 1985),

as well as a range of therapies with wider applicability that are important in the addiction field, such as cognitive behavioural therapy (Beck et al., 1993), and rational emotive therapy/rational recovery (Ellis & Volten, 1992; Galanter et al 1993).

Whilst understanding of substance use problems continues to develop, one of the more exciting new areas to emerge has been behavioural addictions. In this issue McLachlan & Starkey (2012) and Faisandier & Taylor (2012) both explore behaviours which they propose be considered as being addictive for some individuals. This departure from a more traditional focus on the use of psychoactive substances as the natural domain of addiction is representative of a growing interest in an expanded concept of addiction able to include a range of behaviours. Whilst gambling remains the most studied and orthodox behaviour to consider as potentially addictive (Petry, 2010) attention has turned to several other behaviours, most notably compulsive shopping (Black, 2007) eating (Wang et al., 2004), sex (Goodman, 2001), pornography use (Twohig et al., 2009) and computer gaming (Duven et al., 2011). Ultimately it may only be some of these that are accepted as being capable of producing an addictive pattern, but it will only be through further careful exploration, as demonstrated in the accompanying papers, that consensus on these questions can be reached.

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