

# Addiction Exchange

News from the worlds of clinical practice and research

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Welcome to *Addiction Exchange*, a forum for the exchange of clinical practice and research information among clinicians, scientists, educators, and administrators in the field of addiction. In this issue, we discuss a research-based guide to treatment based on the NIDA publication *Principles of Drug Addiction Treatment* (1999). This publication reviews the current research that substantiates the effectiveness of drug addiction treatment. We will focus on the first seven of the thirteen principles that have proven to be components of successful treatment. The remaining principles will be discussed in our next issue.

**Principle 1:** *No single treatment is appropriate for all individuals.* Research has indicated that there is no single approach to drug addiction treatment that is effective for all clients. Instead, treatment matching of the appropriate setting, clinical interventions, and ancillary services contribute to the success of all clients in drug addiction treatment.

**Principle 2:** *Treatment needs to be readily available.* Many people who have drug problems are ambivalent or reluctant to seek help. When an individual does take the initiative to seek treatment, it must be readily available in order to maximize the potential of the client's readiness to change. Waiting lists or lack of appropriate programs are a barrier to treatment effectiveness.

**Principle 3:** *Effective treatment attends to multiple needs of the individual, not just his or her drug use.* Drug addiction can cause many problems for an individual. Medical, family, psychological, legal, and employment issues need to be addressed as part of ensuring a successful treatment experience for each client.

**Principle 4:** *An individual's treatment and services plan must be assessed continually and modified as necessary to ensure that the plan meets the person's changing needs.* As stated in the previous principle, clients in drug addiction treatment may have other problems and needs that require assessment and treatment. Although some of these may be apparent in the initial stage of treatment, often they emerge as treatment progresses. Clients may need different types of clinical interventions depending on the stage of treatment they are in, the problems that emerge, and their individual profile. Ongoing assessment is necessary in order to monitor these changing needs.

**Principle 5:** *Remaining in treatment for an adequate period of time is critical for treatment effectiveness.* Research has found that most patients benefit from about three months of treatment. Again, the individual needs of each client should be assessed and the three-month period used as a general guideline. Programs should develop strategies to engage clients and ensure they remain in treatment for the appropriate length of time to allow treatment to be effective.

**Principle 6:** *Counseling and other behavioral therapies are critical components of effective treatment for addiction.* There are various counseling approaches that have proven to be effective in treating drug addiction. Supportive-expressive counseling is an approach that uses supportive techniques that decrease defensiveness and expressive techniques that increase clients' ability to identify personal problems. Motivational enhancement therapy is a client-centered approach which focuses on helping clients resolve ambivalence about seeking treatment and matches interventions to client's level of motivation. Relapse prevention is a cognitive-behavioral therapy that helps clients identify relapse triggers and develop behavioral strategies to address these triggers. These are three examples of some of the effective counseling approaches that are supported by research.

**Principle 7:** *Medications are an important element of treatment for many patients, especially when combined with counseling and other behavioral therapies.* The combination of counseling approaches and the appropriate medication has proven to be effective in drug addiction treatment. As previously stated, the individual needs of each client must be assessed. Research has shown that the correct levels of methadone and levo-alpha-acetylmethadol (LAAM) are helpful for clients addicted to opiates. Naltrexone has proven effective for clients addicted to opiates as well as with clients with a co-occurring alcohol dependence. For clients with mental disabilities, research has indicated that medications are an important component of effective treatment.

For further information on evidence based treatment approaches, the Mid-Atlantic ATTC and Mountain West ATTC are offering an online course starting May 1. For registration information, go to <http://www.mid-attc.org> or <http://www.unr.edu/mwattc>.

National Institute on Drug Abuse (1999) [Principles of drug addiction treatment: A research-based guide.](#) A NIH publication, No. 99-4180.

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