

Addiction Exchange

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News from the worlds of clinical practice and research

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Brought to you by FAX, email, and on the web by the Mid-Atlantic Addiction Technology Transfer Center,
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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 electronic resources for practitioners, and raise questions about the implications for clinical practice.

The addiction treatment field is changing rapidly, and practitioners have to stay current as new developments occur. Traditionally, counselors have been expected to educate themselves about developments in the field by reading journals and attending conferences, both of which are problematic given heavy caseloads and scarce resources. The rapid growth in information technology (the Internet in particular) and its impact on the addiction field has many positive aspects and also raises some concerns. A positive influence of new technology is that the internet has made more information accessible to counselors and other addiction treatment professionals, including online versions of journals, research results, government publications and other materials. Search engines and portal sites that gather health and addiction resources provide net-literate practitioners with a wealth of information literally at their fingertips. An implication for clinical practice is that research data and new treatment protocols can now be communicated more rapidly to practitioners. Another positive impact is the access to information for professional development. Forums, discussions, support groups, advocacy groups, publications, practitioners, clients, certifying bodies, and policy-makers are all accessible through the web. Online education gives the counselor access to professional development and recertification credit without leaving the office. Several Addiction Technology Transfer Centers (including the Mid-Atlantic) and other providers offer online courses for continuing education credits, and many universities are offering graduate degrees through programs based at least in part on the web.

An area of concern is the lack of quality control measures. Web sites are inexpensive and easy to produce, and anyone with the time and inclination can put whatever opinions or information they choose on a website. Be aware that not all of the information published on the web is good, valid information. Practitioners must be good information consumers and remain vigilant in ensuring the validity of the information they find. A few resources:

National ATTC Program – credentialing and materials databases, links to regional ATTCs, online education, various resources, research to practice materials. <http://www.nattc.org>

Online Ontime 2001, a campaign of the ATTCs, designed to encourage counselors and treatment programs to get online. <http://www.online2001.org>

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) provides concise fact sheets on drug profiles, special population issues and statistics on drug abuse, and current and back copies of NIDA notes. <http://www.nida.nih.gov>

National Center on Addiction & Substance Abuse (CASA) – information on current research, news, research and programs, publications, resources & links. <http://www.casacolumbia.org>

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration - National Treatment Improvement Evaluation Study (NTIES), Treatment Improvement Protocols (TIPs), funding opportunities, publications and reports. <http://www.samhsa.gov>

Prevlite/National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI) - A service of SAMHSA, NCADI has a wealth of information, including a nationwide directory of treatment programs, databases, research briefs, workplace issues, resources and referrals, etc. <http://www.health.org>

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism - publications and databases - Alcohol Alerts, 9th Special Report to the U.S. Congress on Alcohol and Health, Research Monographs and other publications. <http://www.niaaa.nih.gov>

Online Education is currently offered by at least three of the ATTCs; Mid-Atlantic (<http://www.mid-attc.org>), Mountain West (<http://www.unr.edu/mwattc/>) and New England (<http://www.caas.brown.edu/ATTC-NE/>)

Another issue is the use of technology to provide services to clients, such as “cyber-counseling” via the Internet. Log on to the Mid-ATTC Home Page at <http://www.mid-attc.org>, click on **Addiction Exchange Forum**, and contribute your thoughts on this issue. Here are a few questions to generate discussion: What is an appropriate level of electronic client-clinician interaction? What are some of the concerns or dangers for cyber-counseling and clinical use of the internet – pro and con? What guidelines should practitioners use in interacting via the internet with clients, or using web sites to advertise for clients? Is the internet an appropriate venue for supervision/consultation? Are online courses an appropriate training format for addiction counselors?

We hope you find *Addiction Exchange* useful in your work. Please let us know about your information needs by emailing the editor of Addiction Exchange at mid-attc@mindspring.com, or discuss your training needs by contacting us by email or telephone at (804)-828-9910. Visit the Mid-ATTC website at <http://www.mid-attc.org/>.



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