

Policy Context of Measuring Recovery from Substance Use Disorder



KEITH HUMPHREYS

PROFESSOR OF PSYCHIATRY, STANFORD UNIVERSITY
RESEARCH CAREER SCIENTIST, VA PALO ALTO

Public Policy Currents



- Recovery embraced as a policy goal in U.S., Scotland, and England & Wales, murmurings in other nations.
- Some efforts to fund/support “recovery support services” in US
- More people identifying with being part of a recovery movement





The Basic Dilemma



- A concept from outside of medicine
- Medicine has expertise at measuring disease and the absence of disease symptoms/impairments
- Medicine also some experience with measuring rehabilitation
- Yet recovery is not really any of these

So where do we get validity (including face validity)?



- High quality ethnographic/qualitative studies (e.g., Alain Cerclé, Norman Denzin, David Rudy, Ramona Asher, Carole Cain)
- A small number of quantitative surveys have asked recovering people what they think
- Some groups including researchers, clinicians and recovering people have written consensus guidelines

What is Recovery?



- A process addiction individuals experience?
- A desirable outcome for addicted individuals?
- A cultural and political movement/set of values?

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One Influential Definition of Recovery



Betty Ford Institute Consensus Conference:

“Recovery from substance dependence is a voluntarily maintained lifestyle characterized by sobriety, personal health and citizenship.”

A Somewhat Different Definition



UK Drug Policy Commission:

“Recovery is a process, characterised by *voluntarily maintained control over substance use*, leading towards health and well-being and participation in the responsibilities and benefits of society”

A quite different definition



Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery:

“You are in recovery if you say you are”

Definitional Challenges



- 1 Some disagreement about whether individuals who use moderately can be in recovery
- 2 Some disagreement about whether people who abstain from their drug with the aid of medication are in recovery
- 3 Some disagreement that recovery definitions can be standardized at all

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Dealing with diversity among recovery definitions



- Governments and Academics see these as need to emphasize diversity/inclusion
- But this noble impulse overstates the reality of how large the differences are

The Internet meets Bleuler



What is Recovery? Study Participants % Endorsement of Essential Elements



No use of alcohol	94
No abuse of prescribed medication	92
No use of non-prescribed drugs	88
A realistic appraisal of my abilities & my limitations	99
Being honest with myself	99
Living a life that contributes to society, to your family, or to your betterment	99
Being grateful	99
No use of tobacco	64
Physical & mental in nature & has nothing to do with spirituality or religion	65

Key Point



- Be careful to not in the name of inclusiveness make the concept meaningless or divorced from lived experience

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The Only Resolution to Pure Subjectivity is to Embrace it



- Any survey should include a simple, face-valid question like “Do you consider yourself to be in recovery from addiction”

Time for Q and A