

# Ethical issues related to alcoholism

Can science help to explain them

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# Zahvala:



REPUBLIKA SLOVENIJA  
**MINISTRSTVO ZA IZOBRAŽEVANJE,  
ZNANOST IN ŠPORT**

# Why shall we talk about ethics

- Vignette 1

- 56 year old man, abstains from alcohol for more than five years, now in family therapy:
  - has pain in the body and difficulties with breathing;
  - his family doctor (FD) didn't want to approach his physical problems -- as he is an alcoholic; patient's wife argued with FD, they had to find the other FD
  - Came for family therapy – was sent from psychiatrist to the hospital (urgent); result: lung cancer with metastases in bones
- What would be ethical actions in this case?

# Why shall we talk about ethics

## Vignette 2

- 53-years old patient with decompensated liver cirrhosis was sent to our department for treatment:
  - Psychiatrist (not addiction specialist) told him that he will die if he will not undergo inpatient treatment.
  - The patient didn't feel himself for alcoholic, so he denied inpatient treatment for alcoholism.
  - Health insurance physician denied his right to get sick leave.
- Is there any ethical question to talk about?

# Why shall we talk about ethics

- **Vignette 3**
- 42 years old patient came to my office looking for psychiatrist who will give (prescribe) him benzodiazepines, his former psychiatrist left
  - Patient is an drug addict on substitution treatment (in other institution, which is without psychiatrist)
  - He has no motivation to abstain form (legal) psychoactive substances

**Should psychiatrist who's treatment phylosophy is abstinence based treat the patient without motivation to abstain?**

# Addiction – brain disease?

- Medical condition?
- Responsibility?
- Free choice?
- **Cognitive liberty?** Right to mental self-determination
  - The right of each individual to think independently and autonomously, to use the full spectrum of his or her mind, and to engage in multiple modes of thought. Sentenian and Boire (2003)

# Addiction neuroethics

The Ethics of Addiction Neuroscience Research and Treatment  
Carter, Hall, Illes (eds) 2012

- Neuroscience promises to significantly improve treatments and prevention strategies for many disorders of the brain, and even to provide cures where none have previously existed (Insel, 2009)
- Discoveries about the neurobiological bases of human behavior ... hold not only technological promise for treating mental illness, but an *epistemic promise* that will bring forth a radical shift in the understanding of the nature and cause of mental illness and the suffering that accompanies it.
- Addiction neuroethics: wide range of elements of social science, public health, history of science and medicine, science communication – potential applications in the treatment and prevention of addiction.

# Why addiction neuroethics

*Carter, Hall, Illes (eds) 2012*

- Are people who use drugs morally responsible for their behavior?
- How should society respond to people who use drugs in ways that harm themselves and others?
- Is it ethically justified to prohibit the use of some drugs in order to prevent addiction or reduce the social and economic burdens that they cause?



# Why addiction neuroethics

*Carter, Hall, Illes (eds) 2012*

- Is it morally justifiable to legally coerce addicted individuals into treatment?
- Under what circumstances is it justified to test individuals for drug use?

# Why addiction neuroethics

*Carter, Hall, Illes (eds) 2012*

- Should neuroscientists accept research funding from commercial interests whose main aim is to maximize consumption of products that can lead to considerable harm?
- Is it acceptable for health-care professionals to prescribe and keep people on addictive drugs that are otherwise illegal, and if so, under what circumstances.

# Chapters - issues

- State of the science
- **Treatment**
  - Opioid substitution treatments
  - Neurobiological basis of tobacco addiction
  - Neurotechnologies to treat addiction: mitigate craving, long-acting drug implants, drug vaccines, deep brain stimulation
  - Genetic screening – to select addiction treatment for alcohol and nicotine dependence
- Philosophical Reflexions
- Addiction History and the Media
- Public Policy and Legal Issues