The 12 Steps treatment program

Intro and Background:

AA and 12-step treatment are “the most well-known and most recommended option, so that’s kind of where you tend to go.”

As per **Federal Surveys,** more than 70 percent of alcoholic treatment facilities are often deployed in the United States.

AA program is one of the most popular way to treat addiction in professional settings over decades. Most treatment facilities in America are based on the 12 steps.

During 1930’s, 12-Step was established by Bill Wilson, which became the powerhouse for alcoholic treatment in the world. AA spawned a network of affiliated groups like Marijuana Anonymous, AI-Anon, Narcotics Anonymous (for family and friends of alcoholism) and more. In USA, AAs extensive popularity have seized all professional treatment organizations. AA’s spokesperson once said *the actual AA fellowship has nothing to do with professional treatment programs, telling me that “we do not operate, endorse, or comment on treatment facilities.”.* On average, 12 steps program really helps to treat the alcoholism, shown evidence for years. But comes with some major caveats.

Based on USA Federal data, ***substance use disorder*** increased tremendously affecting nearly 20 million people; among which 15 million are in the AA groups itself. Around 88K deaths per year are due to excessive drinking alone.

For some individuals, the 12 steps really do work:

J. Scott Tonigan, a researcher at the University of New Mexico Center on Alcoholism, Substance Abuse, and Addictions (CASAA), said the research supports a *“rule of thirds”*: Due to the 12-step treatment, about a third of people maintain recovery from alcohol addiction, another third gets something out of the treatment but not enough for full recovery, and another third get nothing at all.

Kelly, puts the follows quotes:

* After months, years, or decades of substance disorder, people typically have surrounded themselves with peers and friends have similar substance disorder. This becomes, “one of the major threats to sobriety.” community
* Twelve-step treatment and going to AA meetings, “boost your ability to cope with the demands of recovery.”

Research Case Study:

For decades, there was a lot of bad research in 12 steps treatment program, riddled with the methodological problems made difficult to evaluate whether the 12-steps approach is effective on alcoholism. Finally, in 1990s, **Project Match** offered a better approach. In 12-steps program, patients were placed to conduct randomized clinical trial, cognitive behavioral therapy or motivational enhancement therapy on them. After initial study, an evaluation of three years, researchers concluded that there were a few differences in effectiveness between these methods. Thus, 12-step showed *“a possible slight advantage”* in reducing overall drinking.

Since then, other research studies on substance use disorder have produced similar results as follows:

* **A 2017 study** on adolescent alcohol use disorder found that 12-step treatment fared similarly to both cognitive behavioral and motivational enhancement therapies.
* **A 2009 study** found that people facilitated often AA attendance also reported more days of abstinence.
* **A 2006 study** found that intensive referral to 12-step help groups like AA led to more meeting attendance and better alcohol and drug use outcomes.

Cochrane organization found that while no studies “unequivocally demonstrated the effectiveness of AA or [12-step facilitation treatment] approaches for reducing alcohol dependence or problems,” 12-step treatment program fared about as well as other treatment programs. Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) produces a small but statistically significant treatment effect. 79% individual treated with CBT showed the rates of substance use reduction above the median. Again, much of this research on 12-step facilitation treatment in an outpatient setting.

John Kelly, an addiction researcher at Harvard Medical School, said that AA meetings have shown “compelling evidence.” For example, some randomized clinical trials show that getting people to attend more AA meetings is associated with better drug and alcohol use outcomes. “But,” he added, “I would say we need more studies.” The question is whether greater attendance itself or some other factors such as an underlying motivation to quit drinking drives the better outcome.

What is Cognitive Behavioural Therapy CBT?

CBT teaches substance use disorder to the patient as follows how to

* resist alcohol and drugs when offered,
* deal with difficult life events without resorting to drugs,
* cope with stigma about addiction etc.,
* develop the attitudes and behaviours that may be needed to resist relapse.

How Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) similar to AAs 12 step:

Kelly said “But if you went to 10 AA meetings and listened, you would hear, essentially, cognitive behavioural therapy.”

Why AA meetings work for some people?

AA’s official writings tend to pin 12-steps success to their spiritual elements. Even the final step in program is to invoking “a spiritual awakening.”

While the spiritual element does something for some individuals, but not for the others.

Albert, 35-year-old who have been sober for more than half a year said that spiritual elements in the program to be a big negative - “It did not provide me a burning aspire on spiritual experience to change my life”. But 12 step treatment and AA meetings have helped me to have contact with other people who are sober or trying to be sober, make some new connections and some new friends. He added “It can be difficult as a young adult to socialize without alcohol, or at least it seems like it to me.”

David Sanderson, a 55-year-old said that matched with his experience. “Immediately for me, it was this connection with people that I knew,” Sanderson said, describing his first meeting. He talked about how important “the meeting after the meeting” was in helping him connect to other people — and how that helped add people to his social network who weren’t so interested in drinking. At the same time, he didn’t find much value in the spiritual aspects of the 12 steps.

Changing person’s social network can make it easier to abstain from substance use disorder on which stories like Albert’s and Sanderson’s are backed by several studies. By attending meetings, attendees can connect with others who want to stay sober. This new social network provides support for sobriety, and creates a means to socialize without using drugs or alcohol.

This is the way how it works: Other people stories helped them find coping mechanisms to overcome the triggers for drinking, from staying close contact with other attendees helps to simply drinks a lot of club soda at social events. They learned how to deal with environmental cues and social stress without resorting to alcohol and other drugs.

Christine Timko, an addiction researcher at Stanford, told me. “When people have fewer people doing drugs and drinking in their social network, and they have more people in their social network who aren’t using and drinking, then they’re better off themselves in terms of being able to not drink and use.

12-step treatment really do work, at least some individuals.Motivational training and life enrichment, are much more effective means of getting people to stop drinking.

Why the 12 steps don’t work for others?

“Behind all the success stories with the 12-steps, there are many disappointments.”

Alcoholic Anonymous which as mixed group therapy with Christianity prayers. It makes no differences from other alternatives to AA, one has about the same (not very high) level of being sober for good.

Maia Szalavitz, an addiction journalist and author of **Unbroken Brain: A Revolutionary New Way of Understanding Addiction**, who have focused on the spiritual part of the program to argue that the 12 steps shouldn’t considered to be treatment at all.

When you consult a doctor to get your depression treated, “If he told you that you had to surrender to a higher power, address your character defects, make a moral inventory and pray, you would probably think that you had gone to a quack.”

She said that “If we’re going to argue, as the 12-step people strenuously do, that addiction is a disease, it cannot be the only disease for which the treatment is confession and prayer. That’s just not acceptable.”

A 44-year-old Gerald Zeigler who is religious, said that the 12 steps still didn’t work for dealing with his alcohol addiction. Although he found some value in the group support provided by AA meetings, he felt he was “shamed” by the program as if his struggles in recovery reflected some sort of character flaw. “Everybody has character flaws, but I don’t think that’s the reason for alcoholism,” Zeigler said, arguing that addiction should be treated as a medical condition, not a moral, spiritual, or religious issue. “It was a real turn-off for me.” For some instance, Due to rigid interpretation 12-step can even lead people to reject treatment or work from some individuals.

Medication in Rehab Treatments:

Gabrielle Glaser published an article in 2015 at Atlanta. State’s emphasized potential of naltrexone and medications that can help people from substance use disorder. The evidences, proven that medications can help to maintain abstinence and reduce heavy drinking – “but it doesn’t apply for all and once success can differ depending on how they used.” He talked to the people who use naltrexone, effectiveness varied. Some 12 step treatment programs and AA participants are actively hostile the idea of using medications to treat addiction. Getting out from substance use disorder in a short period of time by consuming naltrexone and interpret sobriety methodology. It is widely considered as a gold standard of treatment. This doesn’t apply for every 12-Step treatment program and AA groups. A spokesperson told that **AA does not take any official stance against medications** by leaving the issues to individuals and their concerned doctors. “Spirituality and acceptance of medication varies from 12-step groups to 12-step groups” Each group focuses on compassion versus confrontation that creates gospel bad experience for some people, causing them to relapses and potentially put their life at risk again.

Conclusion:

There are a lot of good people, support and compassion in AA. One point of agreement: The 12 steps and AA should be available, but it will not be the only option. Researchers found that most treatment facilities in America are based on the 12 steps, making it the only option for many people. While alternate rehab centre’s like **SMART Recovery** or **LifeRing** exist, not nearly as available as AA and they certainly aren’t built into professional treatment programs in the same way as the 12 steps. As a result, in 2016 a report by the surgeon general found that only 10 percent of population with a drug use disorder get specialty treatment. (Although, notably, some research suggests that more than half of people successfully deal with their drug use disorders without treatment.)

Government policies and health care providers could change all of these by putting more resources toward greater access to treatment and alternative groups. More individuals could try to start local branches of the alternatives. New technologies could be used to hold meetings online instead of in person.

AA members Opinion’s:

* It’s so peculiar that they treated as the option for everybody.
* If anyone has difficulties with any of the concepts in AA treatment program, grab on to whatever is going to work.