CIRCLES OF RECOVERY
Self-Help Organizations for Addictions

Self-help organizations across the world, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Croix d’Or, The Links, Moderation Management, Narcotics Anonymous, and SMART Recovery, have attracted tens of millions of individuals seeking to address addiction problems with drugs or alcohol. For the first time, this book provides an integrative, international review of research on these organizations, focusing in particular on the critical questions as to how they affect individual members and whether self-help groups and formal healthcare systems can work together to combat substance abuse. Keith Humphreys reviews over 500 studies into the efficacy of self-help groups as an alternative and voluntary form of treatment. In addition to offering a critical, state-of-the-art review of the international body of research in this area, he provides practical strategies for individual clinicians and treatment systems to interact with self-help organizations in a way that improves outcomes for patients and for communities as a whole.

KEITH HUMPHREYS is Associate Professor of Psychiatry at the Stanford University School of Medicine, and Director of the Program Evaluation and Resource Center. He has received national and international awards for his work, and has served on expert consultant panels for the Center for Mental Health Services, the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, the Office of Behavioral and Social Science Research, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH MONOGRAPHS IN THE ADDICTIONS (IRMA)

Series Editor
Professor Griffith Edwards
National Addiction Centre
Institute of Psychiatry, London

This is a series of volumes presenting important research from major centers around the world on the basic sciences, both biological and behavioral, that have a bearing on the addictions. It also addresses the clinical and public health applications of such research. The series will cover alcohol, illicit drugs, psychotropics, and tobacco. It is an important resource for clinicians, researchers, and policy makers.

Also in this series

Cannabis and Cognitive Functioning
Nadia Solowij
ISBN 0 521 159114 7

Alcohol and the Community: A Systems Approach to Prevention
Harold D. Holder
ISBN 0 521 59187 2

A Community Reinforcement Approach to Addiction Treatment
Robert J. Meyers and William R. Miller
ISBN 0 521 77107 2

Treatment Matching in Alcoholism
Thomas F. Babor and Frances K. Del Boca
ISBN 0 521 65112 3
CIRCLES OF RECOVERY
Self-Help Organizations for Addictions

KEITH HUMPHREYS
Department of Psychiatry
Stanford University School of Medicine
Contents

Acknowledgements x

1 Definitions, scope, and origin of the health-related self-help group movement 1
Points of departure 1
Goals of this book 2
Goal 1: to describe addiction-related self-help organizations 2
Goal 2: to evaluate how self-help group involvement affects members 3
Goal 3: to provide guidelines for clinical and policy interaction with self-help groups 4
Goal 4: to bring science to bear on controversial issues in the field 5
The scope of this book 7
Range of societies examined 8
Benefits and challenges of an international scope 9
Range of addiction-related and non-addiction-related self-help organizations addressed 11
Range of disciplines covered 12
What self-help organizations are and what they are not 12
Nomenclature 12
Essential characteristics of self-help organizations 13
Optional features of self-help organizations 17
Differentiating self-help organizations from other interventions 21
Generic factors behind the development of the self-help group movement in the modern world 24
Five inter-related forces that have fostered the modern self-help group movement 26
Improved public health and wealth 26
Weakening of familial ties 27
Contents

Limits of professional assistance 28
The rise of consumerism in health care 30
Benefits of participation 31

2 An international tour of addiction-related mutual-help organizations 33
  Background and context 33
  Origins, philosophy, and membership of addiction-related self-help organizations 35
    Alcoholics Anonymous 35
    Abstainers Clubs 43
    Al-Anon Family Groups 46
    All Nippon Sobriety Association/the Sobriety Friends Society (Danshukai) 51
    Blue Cross (Croix Bleue) 54
    Clubs of Treated Alcoholics 57
    Double Trouble in Recovery 60
    Free Life (Vie Libre) 63
    Jewish Alcoholics, Chemically Dependent Persons, and Significant Others 65
    The Links 67
    Moderation Management 70
    Narcotics Anonymous 74
    Nicotine Anonymous 77
    Oxford Houses 78
    Pui Hong Self-Help Association 80
    Rational Recovery 82
    SMART Recovery 84
    SOS/LifeRing Secular Recovery 86
    Women for Sobriety 88
  Comparisons and contrasts 90

3 Does self-help group participation lead to positive addiction-related, psychiatric, and medical outcomes? 94
  Conceptual background 94
    The case for evaluating whether addiction self-help groups “really work” 94
    Evaluating self-help groups as analogous to professional healthcare interventions 95
Contents

Randomized clinical trials as a regulating ideal in treatment research 96
  Randomized trials are not necessarily the best guide to useful knowledge 96
  Randomized trials have additional shortcomings specific to self-help group evaluation 97
  Correlational studies and quasi-experiments are no panacea either 98

Outcome studies of specific addiction-related mutual-help organizations 99
  Al-Anon Family Groups 100
  All Nippon Sobriety Association and the Sobriety Friends Society (Danshukai) 102
  Clubs of Treated Alcoholics 103
  Double Trouble in Recovery 103
  Moderation Management 104
  Narcotics Anonymous 104
  Nicotine Anonymous 106
  Oxford Houses 107
  Pui Hong Self-Help Association 108
  Rational Recovery 108
  Secular Organization for Sobriety 109
  Women for Sobriety 109

Outcome studies of AA 109
  Experimental and quasi-experimental studies of AA as a sole intervention 111
  Longitudinal studies of AA's effectiveness in combination with treatment 115
  Summary of AA effectiveness studies 119

Three intriguing questions about AA's effectiveness 119
  Mediators of AA's influence on drinking outcomes 119
  AA's potential for population-level benefits 123
  Weaknesses and possible harms of AA 125

Summary 126

4 A different perspective on change in self-help organizations: spirituality, identity, life stories, friendship networks, and politicization 128
  Moving beyond the treatment-outcome perspective 128
  Scope and background 130
### Contents

#### Domain 1: spiritual change
- Understanding spiritual change in substance-abuse-related self-help organizations

#### Domain 2: identity and life-story transformation

#### Domain 3: friendship-network composition

#### Domain 4: politicization and empowerment

#### Summary

5 How should government agencies, healthcare organizations, and clinicians interact with self-help organizations?
- External support of self-help organizations: benefits and risks
  - Direct health benefits
  - Healthcare cost reductions
  - Challenges to collaboration
  - Summary: moving carefully forward

#### Strategies for governmental support of addiction-related self-help organizations
- Legitimating rhetoric
- Direct financial support of self-help organizations
- In-kind resource provision
- Investments in self-help support organizations
- Media and information campaigns
- Training and education for professional helpers
- Research support
- Self-help groups as participants in relevant policy arenas

#### Strategies for individual clinicians and treatment agencies
- The need for a collaborative mindset

#### Avenues for collaboration
- Making effective referrals
- Empirically supported referral strategies
- Consultation and an experimental attitude over a priori matching
- Common worries about referral
- Helping to start self-help groups
- Technical assistance, lectures, research help, and media referral person
- Attending self-help groups as a professional

#### Epilogue: summing up, moving forward
- Some answers for the Martian
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>ix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are addiction-related self-help organizations and where do they come from?</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What effects do self-help organizations have?</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How might professionals interact with self-help organizations?</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toward a better tomorrow</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| References                                                             | 182 |
| Index                                                                  | 219 |
Acknowledgements

Anyone who writes a book has many people to thank for its virtues, and only himself to blame for its shortcomings. My greatest debt for this book is to Peter Mendel, who must have inhaled ten decades’ worth of library dust while scouring the interdisciplinary literature on self-help organizations. Peter’s trenchant analysis of prior self-help group research was essential groundwork for this book. Doyanne Horst also did heroic service by proof reading the entire manuscript and reference list, and by obtaining Spanish grey literature. Colleen Loomis caught many typographical errors that had escaped my eyes and also helped me to obtain and understand some French articles. Tomofumi Oka offered the same assistance with some Japanese literature, and also patiently answered my series of niggling questions on the distinctions between Danshukai, Danshu-Tomo-no-Kai, and Zenzoku Danshu Renmei. A number of scholars graciously took the time to critique draft sections of the text and to provide important insights into self-help organizations. My warmest thanks for such assistance goes to James Awbrey, Ehab El-Kharrat, A. Thomas Horvath, Lee Ann Kaskutas, Ernest Kurtz, Noriko Kurube, Linda Kurtz, Alexandre Laudet, Klaus Mäkelä, and Josef Ruzek. Series editor Griffith Edwards richly deserves the title of “honorary midwife” for inspiring me with intellectual and personal support throughout the entire process of conceptualizing and revising the book. Last, but certainly not least, I am also indebted to Alcoholics Anonymous, Blue Cross, and Jewish Alcoholics, Chemically Dependent Persons and Significant Others for clarifying specific aspects of their organizations, as I am to the hundreds of members of various self-help organizations who have shared their stories with me over the years.