

Research Looks At Recovery

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Voices in early recovery and long-term stable recovery are finally being heard in the national research literature.

Historically, addiction research has been clinically-oriented and tended to evaluate various treatments against each other rather than looking at recovery. Also, most addiction research has also evaluated people immediately before and immediately after formal treatment - rather than looking at recovery per se, and rather than looking at recovery over a series of many years.

But now more than ever before, research efforts are focusing on what recovery looks like during early recovery and over the long term, for those who have been in treatment and for those who have not. Many professionals that provide formal addiction treatment are heartened at this relatively new recovery-oriented direction for national research. This recovery orientation in research is now providing a growing body of knowledge about the factors that initiate and sustain recovery, including the differences for those needing formal treatment. These recovery-oriented questions and lessons in the national research have been largely missing for decades - a sad truth in the face of this chronic disease.

National research on recovery is clear that:

- Many people who have a substance use disorder at some time in their life enter sustained recovery with the help of friends, family, and a recovery fellowship - without the need of professional help
- Some people with a lifetime substance use disorder enter and sustain recovery through a needed sequence of initial treatment, followed by long-term recovery support
- For those needing formal treatment, initial recovery is primed, initiated, and sustained through a shared effort of family, recovery community, and professional help all through the process
- Recovery support following formal treatment is best when it includes counseling and support of the recovery community over the long-term.

It is exciting to live and work in the field at a time when the stories of those in recovery are being studied, and adding to the effectiveness of those providing care.