



- Title** **Pharmacotherapeutic Interventions in Drug Addiction**
- Agency** **GR, Health Council of The Netherlands (Gezondheidsraad)**
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tel: +31 70 340 75 20, fax: +31 70 340 75 23, www.gr.nl
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Aim

To inform the Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport on the state of the art in the pharmacotherapeutic treatment of drug addiction.

Conclusions and results

Drug addiction is a relapsing brain disease with a tendency towards chronicity. Therefore, treatment of drug addiction should be considered as a part of the medical domain. However, it should be noted that biological, psychological, and sociocultural factors all play a role in the onset and course of the disease.

For the treatment of heroin addiction, more effective pharmacological interventions are becoming available – although not all are currently available in the Netherlands (eg, buprenorphine, lofexidine). For the treatment of cocaine addiction, no effective pharmacotherapies are currently known. In polydrug addicts, pharmacotherapeutic interventions should be directed at the various addictions separately.

Pharmacotherapy can, in many cases, be no more than part of an integrated treatment approach in which psychosocial interventions are also important. Long-term continuation of treatment is usually indicated.

Recommendations

- Medical schools should pay attention to practical aspects in the treatment and management of addicts. The organization and workforce of addiction treatment services should comply with the demands that are placed on healthcare services.
- Public information campaigns about addiction and the treatment options for addicts can contribute to the destigmatization of this patient category.
- Research should be directed at the physiological and cognitive processes (conditioning, memory) that constitute the basis for addiction.

Methods

Systematic review of published scientific literature by an expert committee, combined with clinical knowledge based on experiences in the Netherlands. Peer review of draft report.