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| Title | Treatment of Alcohol Abuse – A Health Technology Assessment |
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Aim

To describe the effect of treatment programs for persons with alcohol dependence and to describe organizational, patient-related, and financially-related health aspects of the treatment.

Conclusions and results

This report is intended to serve as a starting point for the on-going quality improvement of alcohol dependency treatment in Denmark. The report's main conclusion is that several pharmacological and psychosocial treatment programs have positive effects on alcohol dependence. There is little evidence to support the extensive use of disulfiram in Denmark. Treatment with acamprosate and naltrexone is effective in maintaining abstinence and adherence to psychosocial treatment. There is evidence to support targeted cognitive-behavioral therapy compared to standard approaches. Approaches offering both specialized pharmacological and psychosocial treatment have the best results. International cost-effectiveness studies suggest that treatment is cost effective, but the applicability of these results to a Danish setting is uncertain, and Danish cost data are sparse.

The results of this report provide the basis for the individual Danish treatment facilities to review and consider their current treatment options. In addition, the report supplies evidence-based professional input for the preparation of a combined treatment offer for persons with alcohol dependence.

Recommendations

Alcohol dependent citizens constitute a very heterogeneous group. Hence, it is necessary to approach the individual patient and assess what treatment would benefit this person most. Such an assessment presumes, eg, that it is possible to carry out a satisfactory analysis and diagnosis of the severity of the alcohol abuse and its nature, and the possibility of suggesting both pharmacological and psychosocial treatment offers. This type of differentiated, needs-oriented approach can gainful-

ly be supported by development of clinical guidelines and national reference programs in the field of alcohol treatment.

Methods

Systematic literature searches were performed to correspond with the 4 aspects of the health technology assessment (HTA) concept, ie, technology, organization, patient, and finance. The report is primarily based on secondary literature, including HTA reports, meta-analyses and systematic literature examination including Cochrane reviews. Guidelines were also included and, where relevant, supplemented with relatively recent primary studies, especially in areas where no secondary literature could be found. A substantial amount of relevant literature concerning the effect of the treatment programs themselves (the technology) was found while no considerable amount of literature was located concerning the other 3 aspects, ie, organization, patient, and finance.