

Alcoholics Anonymous participation promotes long-term recovery

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A new study published in a special issue of *Substance Abuse* finds that recovering alcoholics who help others in 12-step programs furthers their time sober, consideration for others, step-work, and long-term meeting attendance.

These novel findings are from a 10-year, prospective investigation led by Maria Pagano, PhD, associate professor of psychiatry at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine and principal investigator of the ["Helping Others" study](#). Dr. Pagano and colleagues evaluated the decade long of treatment outcomes using data from a single site in Project MATCH, the largest multi-site randomized clinical trial on behavioral treatments of alcoholism sponsored by the National Institute on [Alcohol Abuse](#) and Alcoholism. In a large sample with high representation of Hispanic problem drinkers, this study investigated the 10-year course and impact of programmatic activities in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) on long-term outcomes. Results showed that participation in Alcoholics Anonymous-related Helping (AAH) produced lowered [alcohol](#) use and increased interest in others at each subsequent follow-up assessment.

"Our study is the first to explore the 10-year course of engagement in programmatic 12-step activities and their simultaneous influence on long-term outcomes," says Dr. Pagano. "The AAH findings suggest the importance of getting active in service, which can be in a committed 2-month AA service position or as simple as sharing one's personal experience in recovery to another fellow sufferer."

This study also found that alcoholics engaged in AAH did more step-work and attended more meetings than those not helping others. In effect, AAH strengthens the commitment to the program that many newcomers have difficulty with in the beginning.

"Consequently, being interested in others keeps you more connected to your program and pulls you out of the vicious cycle of extreme self-preoccupation that is a posited root of addiction," says Dr. Pagano.

Dr. Pagano's continued research in this area is exploring whether or not similar patterns emerge among minors in recovery.

Provided by Case Western Reserve University

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