

Treatment for alcoholism dramatically reduces the financial burden of addiction on families

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The financial effects of alcoholism on the family members of addicts can be massive, but little is known about whether treatment for alcoholism reduces that financial burden. A study of 48 German families published online today in the journal *Addiction* reveals that after twelve months of treatment, family costs directly related to a family member's alcoholism decreased from an average of €676.44 (£529.91, US\$832.26) per month to an average of €145.40 (£113.90, \$178.89) per month. Put another way, average costs attributable to alcoholism decreased from 20.2% to 4.3% of the total pre-tax family income.

Among those 48 families, two of the largest family expenditures directly related to alcoholism were for [alcoholic beverages](#) (averaging €252.13/£197.51/\$310.29 per month) and cigarettes (averaging €92.98/£72.83/\$114.43 per month). Twelve months into treatment, those costs had reduced to €70.63 (£55.32, \$86.92) and €64.21 (£50.29, \$79.04) per month.

Also, after twelve months of treatment, the average amount of time spent caring for the affected family member dropped from 32.2 hours per month to 8.2 hours per month. Using the minimum wage in Germany for employees in the nursing industry (€8.50 per hour), informal care provided by family members initially piled on an additional financial burden of €274.30 (£214.87, \$337.66) per month, which reduced to €69.79 (£54.67, \$85.88) per month after one year of treatment.

Even in cases of relapse, treatment for alcoholism still reduced the financial burden on families, but only by €65.22 (£51.09, \$80.26) per month on average.

Lead author Dr. Salize (Central Institute of Mental Health, Mannheim, Germany) says, "We're opening up an area of [addiction research](#) that doesn't receive much attention. When they look at effects on families, addiction studies mainly focus on problems such as [domestic violence](#) and depression, not on the [financial burden](#) of caring for an alcoholic. But when health services and policymakers study the costs and benefits of treating alcoholism, they need to know that treatment has an immense financial effect not just on the alcoholic but also on his or her spouse, partner, children, and parents. The benefits of treatment reach well beyond the individual patient."

More information: Salize H.J, Jacke C., Kief S., Franz M., and Mann K. Treating alcoholism reduces financial burden on caregivers and increases quality-adjusted life years. *Addiction*, 107: [doi:10.1111/j.1360-0443.2012.04002.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1360-0443.2012.04002.x)

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