

Mapping the future of adolescent substance use treatment

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Adolescent substance use treatment is at a critical turning point – treatment success is short-lived and the field lacks a definitive best approach. Researchers from the University of Pittsburgh conducted a comprehensive literature review to identify the common traits underlying different therapies aimed at reducing substance use and then recommend future directions. Their findings are available as part of an adolescent-focused special issue from Substance Abuse, the official journal of Association for Medical Education and Research in Substance Abuse (AMERSA) and a publication from Routledge.

"Psychotherapy research has shifted," co-author Dr. Tammy Chung mentioned, "from comparing outcomes across different types of treatment to determining 'how' and 'for whom' an intervention works." In keeping with this new approach, the review at hand focused on studies concerning mechanisms of change for various "brands" of psychotherapy and distilled important implications for treating adolescent substance users. "Our critical review on the limited existing treatment mechanism studies," explained co-author Dr. Jessica Black, "found that 'common' processes, such as positive social support, rather than a particular treatment modality, account for positive adolescent substance use outcomes."

As for the future of adolescent substance use treatment, Drs. Chung & Black describe a need to focus on the "active ingredients" of therapies and their respective "targets." In addition, practitioners need to gain a better handle on the interaction between these aspects of specific

therapies, overarching "common processes" like positive social support, and patients' lives outside of [treatment](#).

More information: Jessica J. Black Ph.D. & Tammy Chung PhD, "Mechanisms of change in adolescent substance use treatment: How does treatment work?," *Substance Abuse*, [DOI: 10.1080/08897077.2014.925029](#)

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