

University of Wollongong - Research Online

Thesis Collection

Title: The impact of intervention with relatives of treatment resistant drinkers: changes in relatives' psychological functioning and drinkers' behaviour.

Author: Janis Fairbairn

Year: 2002

Repository DOI:

Copyright Warning

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site.

You are reminded of the following: This work is copyright. Apart from any use permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, no part of this work may be reproduced by any process, nor may any other exclusive right be exercised, without the permission of the author. Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material.

Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.

Unless otherwise indicated, the views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the University of Wollongong.

Research Online is the open access repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: research-pubs@uow.edu.au

2002

The impact of intervention with relatives of treatment resistant drinkers: changes in relatives' psychological functioning and drinkers' behaviour.

Janis Fairbairn
University of Wollongong

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/theses>

University of Wollongong

Copyright Warning

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site.

You are reminded of the following: This work is copyright. Apart from any use permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, no part of this work may be reproduced by any process, nor may any other exclusive right be exercised, without the permission of the author. Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material.

Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.

Unless otherwise indicated, the views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the University of Wollongong.

Recommended Citation

Fairbairn, Janis, The impact of intervention with relatives of treatment resistant drinkers: changes in relatives' psychological functioning and drinkers' behaviour, PhD thesis, Department of Psychology, University of Wollongong, 2002. <http://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/321>

NOTE

This online version of the thesis may have different page formatting and pagination from the paper copy held in the University of Wollongong Library.

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

COPYRIGHT WARNING

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site. You are reminded of the following:

Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material. Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.

**THE IMPACT OF INTERVENTION WITH
RELATIVES OF TREATMENT RESISTANT
DRINKERS: CHANGES IN RELATIVES'
PSYCHOLOGICAL FUNCTIONING AND
DRINKERS' BEHAVIOUR**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment for
the award of the degree

DOCTOR of PHILOSOPHY
(Clinical Psychology)

from

THE UNIVERSITY of WOLLONGONG

by

JANIS FAIRBAIRN

B.A (Hons) Dip Teach

DEPARTMENT of PSYCHOLOGY

2002

THESIS CERTIFICATION

I, Janis A Fairbairn, declare that this thesis, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Department of Psychology, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Janis A Fairbairn

March 21 2002

ABSTRACT

Forty three research participants (40 female, 3 male) who were in ongoing contact with treatment resistant dependent drinkers, completed the 10 session FOCUS intervention at the Australian Institute of Alcohol and Addictions (Holyoake) in Perth, Western Australia. This Holyoake intervention focussed *exclusively* on the needs of relatives of excessive drinkers and did not teach relatives how to encourage their drinkers into treatment. The intervention aimed to minimise the harm experienced by relatives by improving their well being and coping, and assisting them to recognise behaviours which may *unwittingly* enable their drinkers' excessive consumption to continue.

Participants were allocated to one of 2 groups; viz. Immediate Entry to treatment or Waitlist. The Waitlist group commenced treatment at the completion of the waitlist period. Data were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively and there was a high level of consistency between the two analyses. The quantitative data were analysed by repeated measures MANOVA with treatment and time (pre, mid, end treatment and 3 months and 6 months post treatment) as the independent variables.

Given the quasi-experimental design, the results need to be viewed cautiously.

It appeared that the Holyoake intervention produced significant improvements in participants' mental health, coping, and relationship status which were sustained through 6 months post treatment. Moreover, as a "spin off" of treatment (according to participants' observations), a significant, sustained reduction in the amount of alcohol their drinkers consumed on any given drinking day was identified.

Twenty five participants did not complete the intervention and 13 of these (the Late Dropout group) were available for follow up 5 weeks after completing 5 treatment sessions. Despite the small sample size, a pattern of significant effect similar to the Full Treatment group was evident on participants' mental health and coping status. Moreover, it seemed that the "spin off" effect of treatment on drinkers' abusive behaviour and consumption patterns was more pervasive for the Late Dropout group. These data suggested that the Late Dropout group may have decided to terminate treatment because their situations had improved.

Participants' raw data (n=68), which included all participants who had *commenced* treatment, revealed that whilst 69% of their drinkers had either sought help

(n=13) or reduced their consumption *to some degree*, 50% had made *substantial* change. Given data was analysed wherever possible by the intention to treat principle, these figures were also expressed in terms of all participants who had been *allocated* to treatment (n=83). Thus, the least favourable “spin off” effect on drinkers’ behaviour appeared to be that whilst 57% had made *some degree* of positive change, 41% had made *substantial* change.

Content analyses of the Full Treatment group’s qualitative interviews (n=43) revealed that only 16% of participants predominantly used assertive coping strategies to deal with difficult situations with their drinkers prior to the Holyoake intervention. However, by the end of the intervention, participants’ use of assertive behaviours had increased dramatically to 81%; e.g. clear messages, emotional control and confidence, improved boundaries and communication, and assertive confrontation. Sixty seven percent of participants identified their own personal empowerment (i.e. self responsibility and self efficacy) as the most important factor which had helped them deal more effectively with their situations.

This research in no way suggested that participants were in any way *responsible* for their drinkers’ behaviour. It has merely highlighted the considerable *influence* one family member has on another. Therefore, this research seemed to debunk the widely held belief that dependent, treatment resistant drinkers cannot be helped until they admit their problem, and actively seek help.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I extend my sincere thanks to:

- Jan Battley, the Executive Director of the Australian Institute on Alcohol and Addictions (Holyoake) for making the resources of Holyoake available to me over the 2 year data collection period;
- Dianne Brown, Holyoake Research Assistant, for her eagerness to learn, helpful suggestions, dedication, and thorough attention to detail;
- The participants in this research who so willingly and carefully completed their many questionnaires and interviews, and taught me so much about personal empowerment;
- Dr Jessica Grainger, my supervisor, for her consistent support, practical suggestions, and constructive criticism;
- Peter Caputi, for his patient assistance in data analyses;
- Michelle Pienaar, for her thorough editing, and useful suggestions;
- Don Heggie for his loving, practical support and encouragement, good ideas, and sub editing;
- Susan Gardner and Eva Castle for their invaluable assistance with graphics;
- My family and friends for their long suffering support and encouragement, who will be as delighted as I am that this thesis has *at last* come to THE END!; and
- My father Claude, and my mother Marion, for enabling me to experience the many positive aspects of growing up in a *recovering* alcoholic family.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Thesis certification	(ii)
Abstract	(iii)
Acknowledgements	(v)
List of tables	(x)
List of figures	(xv)
List of appendices	(xvii)
 Chapter 1 Introduction: the nature of the problem	
1.1 The impact of excessive drinking on relatives	3
1.2 The impact of excessive parental drinking on children	5
1.3 The need to treat relatives of excessive drinkers in their own right	7
 Chapter 2 The stress and coping patterns of partners of excessive drinkers	
2.1 The dependent use of alcohol	12
2.2 The interdependent stress, coping, and transactional patterns which develop between excessive drinkers and their relatives	14
2.3 The stresses and strains of relatives of excessive drinkers	18
2.4 How relatives cope with their drinkers' unacceptable behaviour	19
2.5 The stress/coping/transactional model	21
 Chapter 3 Relatives as agents of change	
3.1 Relatives as adjuncts to their drinkers' treatment	26
3.2 Relatives as early intervention agents	28
 Chapter 4 Treatment for relatives in their own right	
 Chapter 5 The process of change: moving from not thinking about it to taking action	
5.1 How do people move from precontemplation to thinking about the need for change?	46
5.2 How do people move from contemplation into the action stage of change?	47
5.3 How do people maintain their decision to take action?	49

5.4	What motivates people to take action and maintain their changed behaviours? ...	49
5.5	The relevance of these models of change and motivation to partners of excessive drinkers	52

Chapter 6 The empowerment process for relatives of excessive drinkers

6.1	The mental health status of partners of excessive drinkers prior to intervention: the empirical evidence	56
6.2	The conceptual framework underpinning relatives' stresses and strains	57
6.3	Effective therapeutic approaches to reduce emotional distress, marital discord, and ineffective coping in the general population	68
6.4	Appropriate interventions to empower relatives of excessive drinkers to improve their mental health, coping and relationship status.....	72
6.5	The construction of an intervention program to empower relatives of excessive drinkers to improve their mental health, coping, and relationship status.....	79
6.6	The likely impact of relatives' process of empowerment on their treatment resistant drinkers	84

Chapter 7 Formulation of research questions and hypotheses

7.1	Summary of the thesis argument thus far.....	88
7.2	Research questions.....	92
7.3	Intervention hypotheses.....	95
7.4	Outcome follow up: the durability of intervention effects.....	99
7.5	An examination of the processes of change based on research participants' accounts: a qualitative perspective.....	102

Chapter 8 Method

8.1	Research participants	104
8.2	Measures	104
8.3	Procedure	117

Chapter 9 Results: The impact and durability of the intervention program

9.1	Pre intervention profile of research participants and their treatment resistant drinkers	130
-----	---	-----

9.2	The effect and durability of the Holyoake intervention for the Full Treatment group (n=43).....	143
9.3	The effect and durability of partial treatment for the Late Dropout group who were available for follow up (n=13)	168
9.4	A comparison between the Late Dropout group and the Full Treatment group	179

Chapter 10 Discussion: The effect and durability of the Holyoake intervention: the quantitative data

10.1	Discussion regarding the significant reduction in participants' control and tolerant coping strategies during the waitlist period effect on participants' mental health status	189
10.2	The effect of the Holyoake intervention on participants' mental health, coping drinkers' consumption patterns and help seeking behaviour from the Full Treatment group	192
10.3	Discussion regarding the "spin off" impact of participants' intervention effect on drinkers' consumption patterns and help seeking behaviour their drinkers.....	211
10.4	Discussion regarding the effect of partial treatment (5 sessions) for the Late Dropout group (n=13) on participants' mental health, coping and relationship status, and the "spin off" of this on their drinkers' behaviour	215

Chapter 11 Results and Discussion 2: Participants' qualitative experiences during treatment

11.1	What participants found <u>most</u> difficult to deal with in relation to their drinkers' behaviour prior to intervention	228
11.2	Changes during treatment in participants' major difficulty in relation to their drinkers' behaviour, how they handled that difficulty, and the outcome.....	237
11.3	Changes during treatment in how participants handled their overall situations with their drinkers	256
11.4	Participants' identification of what most helped them to more effectively handle their situations	262
11.5	Changes in the quality of relationships between participants and their drinkers throughout treatment.....	266

11.6 Changes in drinkers' consumption during participants' intervention program	269
 Chapter 12 Summary and conclusions	
12.1 Rationale for this research.....	275
12.2 Purpose of this research	278
12.3 The qualitative experiences of participants during the intervention program.....	280
12.4 Strengths and weaknesses of the research design	280
12.4 Major findings from the research.....	281
12.5 Significance of the findings from this research.....	286
12.6 Limitations and ethical and professional issues involved in this research.....	290
12.7 The need for further research identified by this thesis	293
12.8 General conclusions	294
References	297
Appendices (attached on CD)	324

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1	A typology of coping strategies commonly used by relatives of excessive drinkers	20
Table 3.1	Examples of treatment programs designed to train relatives of treatment resistant drinkers as change agents.....	29
Table 4.1	Unpublished results of an uncontrolled family program conducted by the current author in the Northern Territory of Australia (1981).....	39
Table 4.2	Examples of programs focussing primarily on the needs of relatives of excessive drinkers	42
Table 5.1	Major processes and associated behavioural goals involved in changing addictive behaviours.....	45
Table 5.2	Stages of change in which particular processes of change are most useful	45
Table 5.3	Strategies for maintaining the action stage of change.....	50
Table 6.1	Effective treatment techniques for marital discord.....	71
Table 6.2	Intervention aims, therapeutic elements, and results of interventions designed to improve the psychological functioning of relatives of treatment resistant drinkers.....	75
Table 6.3	Stress and strains which are possible for relatives of excessive drinkers to control, range of effective interventions, and outcome measures.....	80
Table 6.4	Intervention elements, aims, learning objectives, and associated skills and strategies of a program specifically designed to empower partners of excessive drinkers.....	82
Table 8.1	Dependent variables and measuring instruments.....	106
Table 8.2	Drinkers' Partners' Coping Questionnaire (DPCQ) subscales, descriptions, and example items	114
Table 8.3	Program elements and learning objectives of the FOCUS program.....	125
Table 9.1	Descriptive statistics for participants on the SMAST and treatment resistant drinkers on the SMAST Family Form.....	131

Table 9.2	Examples of participants' responses to the Change Questions categorised as precontemplation or contemplation.....	132
Table 9.3	Mean scores and standard deviations of participants' age, and education completed	133
Table 9.4	Research participants' occupational categories and family income levels	134
Table 9.5	Participants' parents' use of alcohol.....	136
Table 9.6	Type of relationship between participants and their drinkers	137
Table 9.7	Length of time participants had been experiencing problems due to their drinkers consumption	137
Table 9.8	Examples of drinkers' responses to notification that their relatives were seeking help	139
Table 9.9	Comparisons between mental health variable mean scores for female and male participants and the CCEI's normative data	140
Table 9.10	Drinkers' occupational categories	141
Table 9.11	Length of time participants had been experiencing problems due to their drinkers' excessive consumption.....	142
Table 9.12	Pre treatment comparisons between participants allocated to either Immediate Entry or Waitlist groups for all participants allocated (n=83) and participants who commenced treatment (n=68) across the three major variable groups; i.e. participants, their relationships, and drinkers' their drinkers, and their drinkers' consumption patterns.....	146
Table 9.13	Comparative analyses for the Waitlist group at the beginning and end of the waitlist period for participants, their relationships and their drinkers' consumption patterns (n=25)	148
Table 9.14	Comparisons between mean scores across all variables from the "Non Starter" group (n=15) and the Composite Treatment group (n=68)	150
Table 9.15	Summary of mean scores, standard deviations, and univariate analyses for the Full Treatment group (n=43) from pre treatment through end treatment and 3 months and 6 months post treatment across the 3 major variable groups (participants, their relationships with their drinkers and their drinkers' consumption patterns)	153

Table 9.16	Changes in participants' mental health mean scores between measurement periods throughout treatment, and between end treatment and 3 months and 6 months post treatment for the Full Treatment group	157
Table 9.17	Changes in participants' coping mean scores between measurement periods throughout treatment and between end treatment and 3 months and 6 months post treatment for the Full Treatment group	160
Table 9.18	Changes in participants' perception of the quality of everyday interactions mean scores when drinkers were drinking (or not drinking) between measurement periods throughout treatment and between end treatment and 3 months and 6 months post treatment for the Full Treatment group	162
Table 9.19	Changes in marital discord mean scores between measurement periods throughout treatment and between end treatment and 3 months and 6 months post treatment for the Full Treatment group	163
Table 9.20	Changes in drinkers' verbal abuse mean scores between measurement periods throughout treatment and between end treatment and 3 months and 6 months post treatment for the Full Treatment group	165
Table 9.21	Changes in participants' perceptions of reductions in drinkers' consumption on any given drinking day between measurement periods throughout treatment and between end treatment and 3 months and 6 months post treatment for the Full Treatment group	167
Table 9.22	Participants' reports (raw data) of drinkers' reduced consumption, help seeking behaviour, or increases in consumption from pre treatment through 6 months post treatment for the Full Treatment group	169
Table 9.23	Summary of means, standard deviations and univariate analyses for the Late Dropout group from pre treatment through 5 treatment sessions and 5 weeks post treatment (n=13).....	172
Table 9.24	Summary of means, standard deviations, and univariate analyses for the Full Treatment group (n=43) from pre treatment, end waitlist period, through mid treatment (5 sessions) and end treatment (10 sessions) across the 3 major variables groups (participants, their relationships with their drinkers, and their drinkers' consumption patterns).....	174

Table 9.25	Changes in participants' mental health and coping mean scores between pre treatment and 5 treatment sessions through 5 weeks post treatment their drinkers, and their drinkers' consumption patterns).....	176
Table 9.26	Changes in participants' relationship mean scores after 5 treatment sessions through 5 weeks post treatment for the Late Dropout group (n=13).....	178
Table 9.26	Changes in participants' relationship mean scores after 5 treatment sessions through 5 weeks post treatment for the Late Dropout group (n=13).....	178
Table 9.27	Changes in participants' mean scores of drinkers' consumption mean scores after 5 treatment sessions through 5 weeks post treatment for the Late Dropout group (n=13).....	180
Table 9.28	Inconsistent results between the Late Dropout group (n=13) and the Full Treatment group (n=43) for participants' mental health, coping, and relationship status, and drinkers' consumption patterns	182
Table 9.29	Participants' cumulative reports (raw data) of drinkers' help seeking behaviour and reduced consumption after 5 treatment sessions through 5 weeks post treatment for the Late Dropout group (n=20).....	184
Table 9.30	Participants' cumulative reports (raw data) of drinkers' help seeking behaviour and reduced consumption after 5 treatment sessions through 5 weeks post treatment for the combined Dropout groups (n=25)	185
Table 9.31	Comparisons between participants' reports of change in drinkers' help seeking behaviour and consumption patterns (raw data) for the Full Treatment group, the Late Dropout group (n=20), and the combined Full Treatment and Dropout group (n=68), and the group who were allocated to treatment (n=83).....	187
Table 11.1	Thematic analysis of participants' pre treatment responses to the question; "Over the past 2-3 months, what have you found most difficult to deal with in relation to your partner's drinking and/or behaviour?	229
Table 11.2	Thematic analysis of participants' pre treatment responses to the question; "How do you usually handle that?" (i.e. most difficult situation in relation to drinkers' behaviour)	231

Table 11.3	Predominant coping strategies and outcomes for each category of major difficulty from collation of participants' pre treatment responses to the questions, "What have you found <u>most</u> difficult to deal with in relation to your partner's drinking or behaviour over the past 2-3 months?"; "How do you usually handle that?"; and "What happens between you when you handle it that way?" (n=43).....	232
-------------------	---	-----

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1	The interdependent stress and coping patterns which develop between partners and their drinkers	16
Figure 2.2	Transactional model of partners' coping with their drinkers' excessive consumption (reproduced with permission from Orford,1994)	23
Figure 6.1	Descriptive model of partners' pre intervention stresses and strains	58
Figure 6.2	The process of empowerment for partners of excessive drinkers	87
Figure 8.1	Flow of research participants from initial selection to treatment via Immediate Entry or Waitlist Control groups.....	123
Figure 8.2	Flow through treatment of Composite Treatment Group	129
Figure 9.1	The durability of intervention effect on participants' mental health status from end treatment through 6 months post treatment.....	158
Figure 9.2	The durability of intervention effect on participants' coping status from end treatment through 6 months post treatment.....	160
Figure 10.1	Representation of the effects of the intervention on participants' mental health, coping and relationship status, and the "spin off" of this on their drinkers' behaviour	226
Figure 11.1	Thematic analyses of changes in pre treatment responses to the question, "What have you found most difficult to deal with in relation to your partner's drinking and/or behaviour? from pre treatment through mid treatment and end treatment.....	238
Figure 11.2	Thematic analyses of participants' responses to the question, "How do you usually handle that?" (i.e. most difficult situation in relation to drinkers' behaviour) from pre treatment through mid treatment and end treatment.....	243
Figure 11.3	Categorisation of participants' mid treatment and end treatment responses to the question, "What's different about how you're handling your overall situation with your partner?"	258

Figure 11.4	Thematic analysis of participants' mid treatment and end treatment responses to the question, "What's the most important thing which has helped you deal more effectively with your situation?363
--------------------	---

LIST OF APPENDICES

(attached on CD)

Appendix 1	Psychometric instruments	324
Appendix 2	Non psychometric instruments	331
Appendix 3	Selection instruments	346
Appendix 4	Standardised procedures	351
Appendix 5	Statistical information regarding the Crown-Crisp Experiential Index (CCEI)	356
Appendix 6	Qualitative data 1	358
Appendix 7	Qualitative data 2	364
Appendix 8	Qualitative data 3	367