

The Narconon® Drug Rehabilitation Program

On-going Program Evaluation

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Introduction

During the past three years, there has been an on-going evaluation of the Narconon program at two Narconon facilities in the United States. These facilities are located in Los Angeles, California and Chilocco, Oklahoma. This evaluation is aimed at both monitoring some of the factors involved in delivery of the Narconon program and at assessing the long term results of this comprehensive socio-educational approach. This presentation reviews the findings of this evaluation to date.



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The purpose of this evaluation was three-fold:

- 1) To monitor ongoing delivery to the clients at both Narconon facilities. Daily and weekly reports provided information on each client on the program. This made it possible to create a detailed picture of what it takes to deliver rehabilitation service to hard-core drug addicts.
- 2) To evaluate the success of the Narconon program in retaining clients through the full treatment regimen.
- 3) To assess the long term efficacy of the Narconon program. Efficacy measures included ability to stay off of drugs, criminal behavior and educational or career progress.

Study Design

The client population included every client who started the Narconon program at either Narconon Los Angeles or Narconon Chilocco during the two-year study period. By including every client we avoided bias in the selection.

The initial evaluation included a comprehensive interview based on the widely used 'Addiction Severity Index' and quantitative testing for drugs of abuse in a urine sample, taken on arrival. (The severity index has been used in many evaluations of drug rehabilitation programs.)

The progress of each client was then monitored throughout the study via a daily report and periodic urine testing.

A total of 273 clients participated in this study.

Demographics

The clientele at different Narconon facilities do vary considerably. Factors such as regional problems with drug abuse and governmental support for drug rehabilitation play important roles. To apply the results of this study, it is important to know something about the clients at the two Narconon facilities that were being evaluated.

* 81 percent of the clients participating in this study were male, 19 percent were female.

* The average age was 30.7 ± 8.6 years (range 14-66 years).

* 67 percent were Caucasian, 13 percent Hispanic, 9 percent American Indian, 8 percent African-American and 3 percent other.

Education and Employment

Drugs are gradually eliminated over the first several weeks of the Narconon program. This is concurrent with participation by the clients in the detoxification component of the program.

The educational level was comparable to clients of some other drug rehabilitation programs. Twenty percent of these clients had not completed high school. Eighty percent had completed high school or above, 14 percent had gone to trade school or junior college after high school, 9 percent had completed college and 2 percent had post-graduate degrees such as a masters in business or science or a doctorate degree.

Work Patterns

About half of these clients were currently working. Sixty percent report their usual pattern was to work full-time, yet:

* 46 percent had not worked in the last 30 days.

* Only 37 percent were currently employed.

Many clients had recently lost their jobs, being fired or leaving work due to their drug abuse problems.

Legal Involvement

Of the clients participating in this study:

- * 22 percent admitted having engaged in illegal activity for profit in the last 30 days.
- * On average, those who were currently engaged in illegal activities admitted to having done so 13 of the last 30 days.

From a longer term view:

- * 81 percent of these Narconon clients had been incarcerated in their lifetime.
- * 33 percent of these clients had been incarcerated for longer than a month.
- * 13 percent had been incarcerated for longer than a year in their lifetimes.

On average, they had been in jail 4.3 years \pm 10.5 months in their lifetimes.

Illegal activities are a major problem in this group. As described later, the Narconon program does have a very positive effect on these statistics.

Drugs of Abuse

The preferred drug of abuse does vary considerably among clients participating in the Narconon program. The primary drug of abuse for clients in this study was:

Crack Cocaine - 65 - (24%)

Alcohol - 52 - (19%)

Other Forms of Cocaine - 36 - (13%)

Heroin - 34 - (12%)

Amphetamines - 33 - (12%)

Marijuana - 5 - (3%)

LSD - 6 - (2%)

PCP - 4 - (1%)

Inhalants - 2 - (1%)

Mixtures - 36 - (13%)

During the time frame of this study, the most prevalent drug of abuse for the clients at the Los Angeles and Chilocco facilities was crack cocaine. Other prevalent drugs, in order, were alcohol, other forms of cocaine, heroin and other opiates, amphetamines, and some marijuana, LSD, PCP and inhalants.

Mixtures of drugs were a problem for a large percentage of this study population. On average, these clients had used more than one drug in 8 days of the prior month. No primary drug of abuse could even be named by 13 percent of this study's clients. About half of these were found to be mainly cocaine and heroin addicts, with a wide variety of other combinations as well.

Abuse at the two facilities, Chilocco and Los Angeles, varied and these facilities had different drugs of abuse than the facilities in Europe. For example, the American Indian population at Chilocco was far more likely to abuse alcohol than other drugs and only the Chilocco facility dealt with inhalant addicts. Similarly, the primary drug of abuse in the Italian facilities was heroin rather than cocaine or crack during this time period.

On average, these clients began using alcohol at age 15 and drugs at age 15 1/2. They had been using drugs, on average, for 15 years.

Prior Attempts at Drug Rehabilitation

Prior drug or alcohol rehabilitation attempts were prevalent in this study population.

- * 22 percent of the clients had previously done an alcohol rehabilitation program and 56 percent had previously attempted drug rehabilitation. For those who had tried rehab, the average was over three previous attempts.

- * 12 percent had been in some other form of rehab in the last 30 days.

- * As a general statement, Narconon clients have had a long-term addiction to drugs or alcohol and have encountered multiple prior failures in treatment.

This is consistent with Narconon's reputation for handling the hard-core, so-called 'intractable' drug addict.

The long-term efficacy study was designed to evaluate individuals who came for the first time to do the full Narconon program. Of the 273 clients monitored during this study, 184 qualified for this group.

Results

Drug Tests During Program Delivery

Urine samples were taken on intake, at two weeks, at one month and at two months into the program for a subset of the full study population. The clients were not warned that samples were to be taken.

88 clients comprise this study group. 68 of these 88 clients, or 77%, tested positive for drug metabolites in urine on intake. The portion testing positive for drug metabolites did vary by primary drug of abuse.

100 percent of the clients whose major drug was crack cocaine had positive urine tests. Other forms of cocaine showed 62 percent of clients with positive tests for drug metabolites. Almost 70 percent of amphetamine users had positive urine tests, 85 percent of opiate users and 50 percent of alcoholics.

As clients progressed through the program, there was a steady decrease in both the percentage of clients testing positive for drugs of abuse and the level of drug found in urine. Testing in this case was occurring during the withdrawal and detoxification treatment periods. Minute but detectable levels of drug metabolites were found in a significant proportion of these clients for several weeks.

On intake, 77 percent of clients tested positive for drug metabolites. By two weeks, 35 percent tested positive for drugs of abuse, though the majority of tests were in the low range.

At one month, 15 percent still tested positive for drug metabolites. The levels of drugs found at this time were quite low, not indicative of recent drug use.

At two months, slightly higher levels of drug metabolites were found in four clients while two demonstrated low levels of metabolites. Two of those with the higher levels were clients who staff had suspected of drinking alcohol and they did test positive.

For most follow-up samples, the level of drug metabolites was less than 1/20th of that found at intake. Although this does not preclude continuing drug use, the low levels suggest that what we are seeing is ongoing elimination of drug metabolites in most of these clients, particularly given the fact that they were on the detoxification program at the time.

This portion of the overall study demonstrates that several weeks may be required for elimination of drug metabolites in some clients. Detectable levels of drugs continue to be eliminated for some weeks in at least a third of the Narconon clients tested.

Monitoring Program Delivery

Daily and weekly reports were made throughout the study period. These assisted Narconon management to isolate specific problem areas in delivery and correct or improve the quality of the program.

Among the improvements implemented during this study were: 1) Specific drills to help the Narconon client gain control over his addiction. 2) Staff training enhancements in the area of detecting clients not qualified for the Narconon program. 3) Increased follow-up contact with graduates to help them stay off drugs and apply what they gained from Narconon to their everyday lives. Weekly then monthly calls from staff helped clients through minor difficulties before they turned into major ones.

Measures of Efficacy

Program Retention

An important factor in judging the success of any program is whether or not it can keep its clients. Retention can refer to both the number of days at a facility and the amount of work completed. The most important point as regards retention is whether the client completed the program.

Of the 273 clients who participated in this study, 66 percent completed the Narconon program.

Similarly, of the 184 clients doing the full program for the first time, 67 percent completed their Narconon programs.

Within this population, program completion did vary by drug of abuse. Of the 184 doing the full program for the first time, crack cocaine users had the poorest rate of program completion (60%) while users of other forms of cocaine had the highest completion rate.

Reduction in Criminal Behavior: (Initial Findings)

There are 123 graduates of the full program in this study population. So far, 48 of these have been interviewed two years after program completion.

For the 48 graduates who have been interviewed, results indicate a marked improvement in criminal behavior.

The number of days participating in illegal activities for profit was, on average, 2.8 of the last 30 days before the Narconon program and 0.4 after. This is a direct comparison of the behavior for these clients before the program (not the whole group) to their behavior after program completion. This change represents an 86 percent improvement in reported criminal activity.

The length of the last incarceration was 3.6 months (108 days) for this group prior to Narconon. The average for this follow-up group was less than one day after the program (over 99 percent improvement).

Finally, the average for days incarcerated in the last 30 was 1.9 prior to Narconon and less than 0.05 after the program (a 97 percent improvement).

Conclusion

The Narconon program is designed to assist the hard-core drug addict. The program deals with individuals having a variety of addictions. Most clients have a long-term addiction with multiple prior attempts at rehabilitation.

Drugs are gradually eliminated over the first several weeks of the Narconon program. This is concurrent with participation by the clients in the detoxification component of the program.

Approximately two-thirds of the clients who start the program do complete it. Preliminary results indicate the program graduates demonstrate marked improvements in their criminal behavior. Interviews also indicate significant improvements in their use of drugs.

The long term evaluation of this program is ongoing. Initial results as reported herein give reason for optimism regarding the effectiveness of this approach in recovering the drug abuser and stably improving his behavior and ability to live within the mores of civilized society.