

## **Drinking goals, their course over time and their associations with treatment outcome: secondary data analysis on a longitudinal study in Swiss alcohol outpatients**

### **Summary**

**State of research:** Reduced drinking programs are widespread in Switzerland and randomized controlled studies suggest that reduced drinking might be as effective as abstinence-oriented treatment for both alcohol-dependent and problem-drinking subjects. However, only few studies addressed the associations of drinking goal preferences with client characteristics and treatment outcomes in individuals entering treatment who naturally prefer abstinence or not. Furthermore, longitudinal changes and patterns of drinking goals and their associations with treatment outcome have not been investigated.

**Objectives:** To conduct a secondary data analysis based on an available data set from a naturalistic, longitudinal multi-center study on the effectiveness of outpatient alcohol treatment in Switzerland. Within this study, including 858 clients, alcohol consumption and individual drinking goals were assessed at beginning and end of outpatient alcohol treatment as well as at six-, and twelve-months follow-up. The proposed study aims at (1) comparing baseline characteristics of clients initially aiming at abstinence with those aiming at reduced drinking, (2) identifying changes and longitudinal patterns of drinking goals and their associations with treatment outcomes, and (3) comparing treatment outcomes between clients aiming at abstinence and those preferring reduced drinking and to interpret any differential outcome in light of baseline differences between clients initially aiming at abstinence or reduced drinking.

**Methods:** Study aim 1: Logistic regression analyses will be performed with demographic variables, health-, alcohol-related and treatment variables entered as independent variables and drinking goal (abstinence vs. reduced drinking) as dependent variable. Study aim 2: Longitudinal cluster analyses and multinomial logistic regressions will be performed to identify changes and longitudinal patterns of drinking goals over the 4 points of data collection. Indicators of a positive treatment outcome will be alcohol abstinence and non-problematic alcohol use according to the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT-C). Study aim 3: Logistic regressions will be performed to investigate the predictive value of drinking goal and other baseline characteristics, covarying with the baseline drinking goal, for the above mentioned indicators of a positive treatment outcome.

**Expected results:** The results arising from this study may have implications for treatment delivery by enlightening on the following questions: Should clients be advised to abstain from alcohol, irrespective of their preferences or problem severity? Which clients should be advised to abstain? Should counselors regularly assess the clients' drinking goal? Should they support or prevent changes in drinking goals?

**Dissemination strategies:** Three articles published in international peer-reviewed journals and two presentations at scientific conferences, one on a national, one on an international level.