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A Discursive Analysis of Addicted Users' Accounts of Opiate Addiction

Sinisi, Vincenzo

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Abstract

This research report undertook an original exploration into the workings of addiction. The theoretical insights of discursive psychology were applied to the study of opiate addiction and were used to analyse the manner in which using and non-using informants were able to constitute addiction through discourse. By comparing the discursive accounts of self-defined recovered, recovering and currently addicted users, the report highlighted how ways of speaking about substances and their use may be implicated in the maintenance and cessation of addiction.

The transcripts of four focus groups, consisting of a total number of 15 informants, were qualitatively analysed using a thematic method that focused on the informants' strategic use of discourse. The analysis revealed important differences between using and non-using informants in terms of the self employed discursive practices that they used in constructing their experience of addiction. Differences included variations in the attribution of agency to either the opiate or the informant and the degree to which opiate use was presented as cause for concern or not. These and other differences were explored in detail together with their potential implications, functions and apparent effects on the users' capacity to maintain abstinence as opposed to continuing to use.