

Addiction as a Developmental Disorder

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Abstract

Addiction is considered as a brain disorder characterised by compulsive engagement in rewarding stimuli despite adverse consequences. The main substrates of persistent compulsive drug use are believed to be molecular and cellular mechanisms underlying long-term associative memories in several forebrain circuits fed by dopamine neurons in the midbrain. This presentation will show that this is not a sufficient explanation for addiction in humans. In humans, an actual unsatisfied emotional need is a necessary condition for the development of addiction. This is usually the result of the poor social conditions in childhood and young adulthood of those affected who have not learned to deal with social stressors in a healthy way. It is shown how new findings of the development of neural networks from birth to young adulthood and the affinity of specific drugs to certain brain receptors satisfy emotional needs with a higher risk of addiction in people with immature or inadequate coping strategies. Based on these findings, it will be shown that the choice of a particular drug depends on the individual's personal history and corresponds to the accompanying emotional needs and deficits. This concept helps both in the general understanding of addiction and in understanding and explaining the origin of individual addiction. Iceland has had a complex and successful drug prevention policy for several years, which is consistent with the approach presented here. Further consequences can be drawn from this for the policy of addiction prevention and treatment.

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Biography:

Henrik Jordan is psychiatrist in social psychiatry, public health at Germany. Before, he worked as a consultant psychiatrist at Netherlands and Germany. He completed his medicine at Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany.