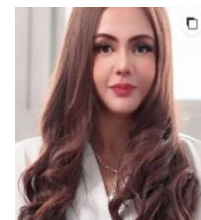


Neurobiological aspects of substance abuse and addiction

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Abstract

Scientific breakthroughs have revolutionized the understanding of substance use disorders. For example, severe substance use disorders, commonly called addictions, were once viewed largely as a moral failing or character flaw, but are now understood to be chronic illnesses characterized by clinically significant impairments in health, social function, and voluntary control over substance use. Although the mechanisms may differ, addiction has many features in common with disorders such as diabetes, asthma, and hypertension. All of these disorders are chronic, subject to relapse, and influenced by genetic predisposition, developmental, behavioral, social, and environmental factors. In all of these disorders, affected individuals may have difficulty in complying with the prescribed treatment. This evolving and empathetic understanding of substance use disorders as medical conditions has had important implications for prevention and treatment. Research demonstrating that addiction is driven by changes in the brain has helped to reduce the negative attitudes associated with substance use disorders and provided support for integrating treatment for substance use disorders into mainstream health care. Neurobiology studies in animals have historically focused on what happens in the brain right after taking an addictive substance (this is called the acute impact), but research has shifted to the study of how ongoing, long-term (or chronic) substance use changes the brain. One of the main goals of research in this field is to understand at the most basic level the mechanisms through which substance use alters brain structure and function and drives the transition from occasional use to misuse, addiction, and relapse.

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Biography:

Aakriti's love for psychology started at a really early age and she has always had an immense passion in understanding the physiological, emotional, cognitive and social determinants of human behaviour. With a prominent background in counselling