

BACKGROUND

- Millions of individuals worldwide successfully overcome drug dependence and live productive lives.
- The recovery community is largely neglected by addiction researchers.
- Examining the lived recovery experience can help elucidate long-term change processes.
- Life satisfaction (LS) is a neglected yet important domain that prospectively predicts sustained remission from drug use. Little is known of determinants of LS among persons in recovery.
- Recovery unfolds within the socio-cultural context. Findings obtained in one country (most often, the U.S.) may not apply where different socio-political views of addiction prevail. Thus there is a need to identify 'universal' as well as culture-specific recovery processes.

AIMS AND METHODS

- Using data from parallel studies, we compare factors associated with entering and maintaining recovery, and test a psychosocial model to quantify the role of stress, intra- and interpersonal resources on life satisfaction among recovering individuals in Australia and in the US.
- Community-based persons in recovery for a year or longer per DSM-IV-R criteria recruited through media advertising in New York City (USA, N = 158) and in Melbourne (Vic., Australia, N = 113).
- Standardized scales assess hypothesized predictors of LS identified from ongoing work: Remission duration, stress, intrapersonal resources (physical and mental health, religious practices and beliefs, spirituality and life meaning), and interpersonal resources (social support for recovery, network size, 12-step attendance and involvement in 12-step recovery).

ANALYSES

- Bivariate analyses to assess the zero-order association between LS and hypothesized predictors.
- Multivariate linear stepwise regressions to quantify the combined contribution of the domains significantly associated with LS in bivariate analyses

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

	New York (n=158)	Melbourne (n=113)
Male	50.3%	57.4%
Age (years)	44.14	43.16
African American	69.4%	0
Education (years)	12.1	10.3***
HIV + (among tested)	26.7%	1.0%***
Hep C (among tested)	31.2%	41.3%*
Ever MH diagnosis	38.5%	63.2**
Ever arrested	77.2%	72.6%
Employed FT/PT	48.7%	58.3

SUBSTANCE USE and REMISSION HISTORY

	New York	Melbourne
Lifetime Addiction Severity (0-14)	11.9	13.5
Age 1 st regular use	14.7	15.0
Every injected	31%	66.4%
Primary problem substance		
Alcohol	0.9	26.6***
Crack	59.2	0.9*
Cocaine	8.9	2.7
Heroin/other opiates	21.8	41.6**
Methamphetamines	0.6	11.5**
Remission duration (Mean months abstinent)	45	72**

REASONS FOR RECOVERY INITIATION (Top six NY & AU)

To what extent was [ITEM] a factor in your decision to make significant changes to your drugs and alcohol use? [scale range = 1-5]

	USA	AU
Didn't like where life was going	4.72	4.20
Tired of drug life	4.65	4.02
Desire to get better	4.67	3.95
Concern about effects of use on loved ones	4.01	3.33
Difficulty getting along with people	3.39	3.17
Seeing negative effects of drugs on other users	4.24	2.47

RECOVERY MAINTENANCE: Current Sources of Strength (Top six NY & AU)

To what extent is [ITEM] helpful to you in your recovery now? [Scale range= 1-5]

	USA	AU
Enjoying life without drugs	4.80	4.66
Being a parent to kids	4.31	4.45
Striving to be honest w/self and others	4.73	4.39
Taking it one day at a time	4.73	4.10
Remembering consequences of drug use	4.80	4.08
Belief or hope that I will get better	4.74	4.06

DESCRIPTIVE OF KEY DOMAINS: Life satisfaction and predictors

	USA	AU
	Mean or %	Mean or %
INTRAPERSONAL (scale range)		
Overall Health Rating (1-5)	3.12	3.58***
Overall Mental Health Rating (1-5)	3.50	3.89***
Mental health problems (SCL10: 0-1)	.59	.62
Life meaning and purpose (1-4)	3.08	3.42***
Spirituality (1-4)	3.32	3.06**
Religious practices and beliefs (1-8)	5.50	3.71***
INTERPERSONAL		
Social support for recovery (1-4)	3.12	3.32***
# people providing emotional support	8.5	8.7
# people available for practical help	8.1	8.2
12-step attendance past year (AA or NA)	79.1%	67.3%*
12-step involvement (0-9)	5.1	4.9
OVERALL STRESS Past Year (0-10)	5.42	5.42
OVERALL LIFE SATISFACTION (0-10)	8.20	7.72*

BIVARIATE ASSOCIATIONS between LIFE SATISFACTION and PREDICTORS

	USA	AU
REMISSION DURATION	.05	.27**
INTRAPERSONAL		
Overall Health Rating	.05	.19*
Overall Mental Health Rating	.16*	.14
Mental health problems (SCL-10)	-.22*	-.29**
Life meaning and purpose	.28**	.55***
Spirituality	.21**	.09
Religious practices and beliefs	.26**	.07
INTERPERSONAL		
Social support for recovery	.14*	.22*
Number people-emotional support	.14	.16
Number people available-practical help	.21*	.13
12-step attendance past year	.11	.02
12-step involvement	.08	.01
OVERALL STRESS PAST YEAR	-.17*	-.22*

ROLE OF REMISSION DURATION, STRESS, INTRA-AND INTERPERSONAL RESOURCES ON LIFE SATISFACTION: Multivariate Analysis (linear regression)

	USA	AU
Remission duration	.01	.01
INTRAPERSONAL		
Overall Health Rating	.01	.15
Overall Mental Health Rating	-.06	-.42*
Mental health problems (SCL-10)	-.26**	.01
Life meaning and purpose	.92*	1.95***
Spirituality	.23	.19
Religious practices and beliefs	.22*	.02
INTERPERSONAL		
Social support for recovery	.17	.15
Number people-emotional support	.02	.01
Number people available-practical help	.08	.08
OVERALL STRESS PAST YEAR	-.03	-.02
F =	2.54**	5.30***
R ² (% explained variations in LS)	16.3%	36.6%

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS and IMPLICATIONS

- Although differing in lifetime dependence severity and primary substance, individuals in long term recovery in the US and Australia cite similar reasons for initiating remission, and draw strength from similar sources.
- Participants in both countries report fairly high life satisfaction and moderate stress levels.
- LIFE MEANING/PURPOSE critical to life satisfaction in both countries. *Underscores the need to create opportunities for engagement in meaningful activities as part of recovery support services (e.g., social, work, leisure, volunteering).*
- Variance explained by full model is relatively small especially in the US, suggesting that other factors not included here influence life satisfaction among persons in recovery. Because life satisfaction plays a critical role in recovery maintenance, additional research is warranted to identify its determinants.
- KEY LIMITATION: Cross-sectional design restricts causal interpretation. Prospective analyses are ongoing with the US sample to elucidate nature of association between life satisfaction and predictor domains
- FUTURE DIRECTIONS: Need to replicate this work in developing countries where addiction is even more highly stigmatized and recovery resources are lacking.