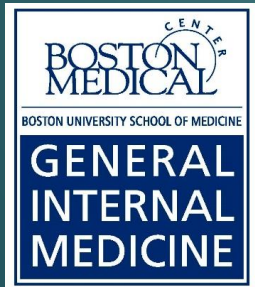


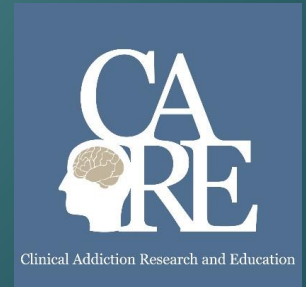
# INTRODUCTION TO MUTUAL SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS

**Amy Fitzpatrick, MD,MS\***  
**Boston Medical Center**  
**Assistant Professor of Medicine**  
**Boston University School of Medicine**

\*Several slides adapted from Jessica Taylor & Sarah Bagley, MD, CRIT/FIT 2019/2023



Boston Medical Center is the primary teaching affiliate  
of the Boston University School of Medicine.



# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of the session, learners will be able to:

1. Explain the value of offering mutual support organizations and peer support as part of a “menu of options”
2. Understand the differences between the various types of 12-step and mutual support meetings
3. List at least 4 guidelines for visitors attending a meeting of a mutual support organization
4. Teach trainees about mutual support organizations in a way that is inclusive of people with lived experience

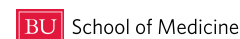
# WHAT IS RECOVERY?



# I HAVE ATTENDED AN ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS OR NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS MEETING...

1. Never
2. Once
3. 2-5 times
4. 6-10 times
5. 11-25 times
6. 26+ times

*Please feel free – but not at all obligated - to be inclusive of  
personal experience*

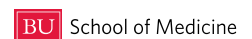


# MUTUAL SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS AS PART OF “MENU OF OPTIONS”

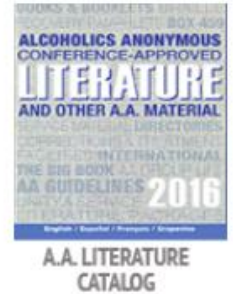
- Addiction treatment should be individualized
- Not possible to predict which combination of treatment will be effective on patient level
- MSOs are the umbrella term when  $\geq 2$  people meet and provide support to each other outside of a formal treatment setting

# WHAT IS ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS?

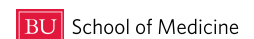
- Anonymous fellowship with the only requirement of membership being a desire to stop drinking
- Founded in 1939 by Bill W. and Dr. Bob
  - Reaching out to others to help stay sober
- No central governing body
- Similar groups: Narcotics Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous, Crystal Meth Anonymous, Al-Anon, Alateen



# THERAPEUTIC ELEMENTS



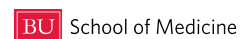
- 12 Steps: spiritual basis/necessary actions (principles)
- 12 Traditions: guidelines for meetings to maintain AA unity
- Sponsorship
- Sober environment of meetings (although persons under the influence are still welcome)
- Fellowship
- Anniversaries- showing newcomers that the program works
- Potential for social network outside of meetings
- Slogans



# PROCESS

- Admitting lack of control over addiction and unmanageability of life in active addiction
- Recognition that a higher power\* can give strength to achieve sobriety
- Examining past mistakes
- Making amends
- Learning to live new life with new code
- Helping others

\*see next slide





# HIGHER POWER- CAN BE ANYTHING/ONE

- God
- G.O.D. = Group of drunks (meaning the fellowship)
- My mother, father, son...insert family member who has passed away
- Mother Earth/Nature
- The Universe
- The Judge
- The Board of Medicine
- My Wife
- Love

# KINDS OF MEETINGS

- Open, closed
- Men's meetings, Women's meetings, Young People's, LGBTQ+
- Professionals' meetings
- Speaker, Beginners, Discussion, Step/Tradition, or Big Book
- In-person, hybrid (in-person and zoom), Online/Virtual\*

\* Began in the Covid era

# RESEARCH HAS SHOWN THAT:

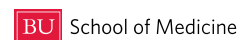
1. AA attendance can reduce health care costs
2. Longer and more intensive AA involvement leads to better outcomes
3. Mechanism of effectiveness varies by gender, age and addiction severity
4. All of the above

# EFFECTIVENESS OF AA

- Challenging to study
- 2006 Cochrane Review
  - No experimental studies unequivocally demonstrated effectiveness of AA or twelve step facilitation (TSF)
  - More efficacy studies needed
- 2020 Cochrane Review
  - AA/TSF superior to other treatments on continuous abstinence
  - AA/TSF similar to other treatments on other drinking outcomes
  - AA/TSF reduces healthcare costs

Ferri M, et al. Alcoholics Anonymous and other 12-step programmes for alcohol dependence. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2006, Issue 3. Art. No.: CD005032.

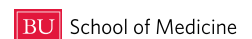
Kelly JF, et al. Alcoholics Anonymous and other 12-step programs for alcohol use disorder. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2020, Issue 3. Art. No.: CD012880.



# MECHANISMS OF EFFECTIVENESS

- Increased self-efficacy, coping skills, and motivation for recovery over time<sup>1</sup>
- Adaptive changes in social networks<sup>1</sup>
- Increased spirituality relevant in minority of participants with severe disease<sup>2</sup>
- Individuals benefit in different ways based on gender, age, and addiction severity<sup>1</sup>
- Effectiveness related to intensity of involvement

1. Kelly JF, et al. (2009) How do people recover from alcohol dependence? A systematic review of the research on mechanisms of behavior change in alcoholics anonymous. *Addict Res Theory* 17:236–59.
2. Kelly JF (2017) Is alcoholics anonymous religious, spiritual, neither? Findings from 25 years of mechanisms of behavior change research. *Addiction* 112:929–36

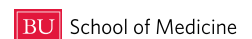


# WHAT DOES AODHealth SAY?

*Comments:* Despite appearing to be a report of AA effectiveness in over 10,000 people in comparative studies, the report's main findings of effectiveness come from modest effects on secondary outcomes in studies with substantial risk of bias in just over 3000 people. More importantly, the studies tested manualized psychotherapy provided in conjunction with or supporting AA attendance or intensive referral to AA, not AA itself. The findings are not inconsistent with the idea that AA can help some people with alcohol use disorder, but they are not solid evidence for substantial effectiveness.

Richard Saitz, MD, MPH

Saitz, R. Are Alcoholics Anonymous and other 12-step programs effective for alcohol use disorder? *Alcohol, Other Drugs, and Health: Current Evidence*. March-April, 2020. Available at <https://www.bu.edu/aodhealth/issues/>. Accessed 10/12/20.



# CHALLENGES WITH 12 STEP

- Belief in effectiveness is often correlated with exposure to positive or negative experience of friends/family/patients
- Reliance on Higher Power with roots from the Oxford Group who were practice First Century Christianity
- Abstinence based
- Concepts of Powerlessness and Surrender
- Stigma against members who are on certain medications such as antidepressants, anti-anxiety medications, or MOUD

# I HAVE REFERRED A PATIENT TO ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS OR NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS...

1. Never
2. Once
3. 2-5 times
4. 6-10 times
5. 11-25 times
6. 26+ times



# REFERRING A PATIENT

- Provide access to list of local meetings
- Download app to find local meetings (NA, AA, SMART)
- Encourage attending with friend/family and trying multiple meetings
- Help choose among different types and locations of meetings (speaker, discussion, beginners')
- Ask if patients have a sponsor and are working steps
- Talk about possible conflicts
  - Religion
  - Medications
  - Concept of Powerlessness
  - Uncertain Evidence

[Find An AA Meeting](#)

Any questions on how A.A. works-give us a call @ 617-426-9444 Mon-Fri 9-9;  
Sat/Sun/Hol. 12-9



249 Towns - 2,200 Meetings

[Click Here](#)

Trouble viewing database:

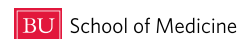
[Click Here](#)

# SMART RECOVERY

- **Self Management and Recovery Training**
  - Established in 1994 in US as an alternative to 12 step programs
  - Recovery method grounded in Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy (REBT) and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
1. Build and maintain motivation
  2. Cope with urges and cravings
  3. Manage thoughts, behaviors, and feelings
  4. Live a balanced life

# SMART RECOVERY MEETINGS

- Led by a facilitator who may or may not have a history of addiction
- Has been through facilitator training provided by organization
- General format is:
  1. Check in (how has your previous week been)
  2. Discussion and/or working a SMART Recovery Tool
  3. Checkout

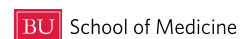


# REFUGE RECOVERY



REFUGE RECOVERY MEETINGS

- A non-profit organization founded in 2016 by Noah Levine
- Adapted core principles of Buddhism
- Meditation is cornerstone of program
- Both in-person and online meetings
- 11 in-person meetings in MA and 79 online in US



# THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS AND THE EIGHTFOLD PATH

- 1<sup>st</sup> truth: Addiction creates suffering
- 2<sup>nd</sup> truth: The cause of Addiction is repetitive craving
- 3<sup>rd</sup> truth: Recovery is possible
- 4<sup>th</sup> truth: The path to recovery is Available

1. Understanding
2. Intentions
3. Speech/Community
4. Actions
5. Livelihood/Service
6. Effort
7. Mindfulness
8. Concentration

# MY PRIMARY CONCERN ABOUT REFERRING TO ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS AND NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS IS:

1. I don't know much about the programs
2. The programs are too religious
3. The programs emphasize that members are powerless
4. Lack of evidence
5. I am not concerned about referring patients

# ATTENDING A 12-STEP MEETING

- Look up local AA website or call central service for information about meeting schedules and locations
  - Many local websites designate which meetings are in person or on Zoom and provide zoom links
- Attend only “open” meetings
- Introduce yourself to greeter if at door
- Be honest and direct about your role as physician observer

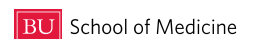
# ATTENDING A 12-STEP MEETING

- Respect confidentiality
- Feel free to join in prayer or closing ceremony
- Give a few dollars if you feel comfortable
- No note taking
- Show gratitude for opportunity to sit in



# SUGGESTED SCRIPT

“Hi, my name is X. We are group of physicians who are taking a course to learn about addiction so we can do a better job taking care of our patients. Since this is an open meeting, is it ok for us to sit in? We really appreciate the chance to be here.”



# ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE FOR VIRTUAL MEETINGS

- Log in 5-10 minutes early to introduce self if possible
- When called on, share name and role as physician observer
- Follow Zoom etiquette for meeting
  - Be on video and attentive if others are on video
  - Go off video if asked by facilitator
  - Mute self after introduction
- No recording, screen shots, or note taking
- Some meetings have been challenged by “Zoom bombers” – feel free to log off if there is inappropriate content

## Attending SMART Recovery meetings:

- Physicians can attend meetings. Email the facilitator ahead of time to let them know (online meeting schedules provide facilitator name, email, and phone number)
- <https://smartrecovery.org/meeting>

## Attending Refuge Recovery meetings:

- Physicians are welcome to attend any meeting. It is suggested to go early or stay late to ask any questions you may have
- <https://url.us.m.mimecastprotect.com/s/1EdRCJ6AlwCNjA71UVEeWV?domain=refugerecoverymeetings.org>