Storytelling in addiction prevention: a basis for developing effective programs from a systematic review

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The dynamic character of drug problems represents a major challenge that needs to be addressed (EMCDDA, 2018).

Programs that have worked well in one social context have not generated the same results when attempted to be extended to other contexts (Biglan & Hinds 2009; Tobler et al., 2000).

Community psychology approach: Ecological diversity should be taken into account when dealing with the problems of use and misuse of substance (Olson, Bradley, Emshoff, & Rivera, 2017, p. 402).
BACKGROUND
FOCUSING THE REVIEW

Narrative Communication

Context
Person
Telling
Stories
Identity
Meanings

Storytelling

Process change
OBJECTIVES

To identify the different adopted approaches in research studies that specifically use the storytelling technique (empirical studies covering factors associated with drug use and recovery and interventions that tackle preventive addictions).

To determine the bases and strategies that underlie a storytelling-based intervention of a fundamentally preventive nature.
METHODS: SEARCH STRATEGY

Search key terms:

Storytelling
AND
addict*, drug*, substance abuse, tobacco, smoking, alcohol*, drinking, cocaine, heroine, cannabi*, MDMA, and amphetamine*

Database: ProQuest platform

- Nursing & Allied Health Database.
- PsycINFO
- MEDLINE®
- Health & Medical Collection
- PsycARTICLES, and Psychology Database

Peer-review journals
English
Before 1 January 2018
METHODS: SEARCH STRATEGY

Inclusion criteria:

• Risk factor studies;
• Studies that analyze the processes surrounding addiction and addiction recovery;
• Studies on the implementation and effects of intervention.

All had to clearly identify the storytelling technique and meet the methodological quality requirements of the research.

Exclusion criteria

• Theoretical reviews
• Commentaries
• Reports, descriptions of techniques and case studies
NARRATIVE SYNTHESIS (POPAY ET AL., 2006)
RESULTS: STUDY SELECTION

Addicti* (792)   Drug (1918)   Substance Abuse (974)   Substance Use (1569)   Tobacco (369)
Smoking (539)   Alcohol* (1272)   Drinking (701)   Cocaine (197)   Heroine (186)
Cannabi* (46)   MDMA (4)   Amphetamine (77)

8644 records identified

Duplicates = 4925

3719 records identified

abstracts that do not address the topic (title, abstract, descriptors and key phrases) = 3535

duplicates, reviews, commentaries, more oriented research in other fields, is not a central objective of research, testing, non-systematic studies, no acces = 155

184 pre-selected abstracts

29 articles meeting inclusion criterion, included in this revision

Fig. 1. Flow diagram.
## THEMATIC CATEGORIES II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approaches underlying the studies</th>
<th>Storytelling technique</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Construction of meanings surrounding consumer practices</td>
<td>• Fictional stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Narrative persuasion</td>
<td>• True story construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Narratives and processes of change in addiction recovery</td>
<td>• Stories of experience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| • Narratives and processes of change:  
  • integrated with other evidence-based programs | • Stories of support |
|                                 | • Shared experiences |
| • Prevention or intervention culturally adapted | • Stories shared in social circles |
|                                   | • Accounts of experiences in digital storytelling |
### Methodology
- Experimental design
- Pilot project and evaluation
- Quasi-experimental design
- Randomized controlled trial
- Thematic analysis with focus groups
- Narrative study
- Grounded Theory
- Ethnographic method
- Community-based participatory research
- Mixed methods

### Context
- Schools / High school / College campus
- Tourist destination
- Indian reservation / Native communities
- Urban and rural areas / Rural counties
- Public housing neighborhoods
- Homes, service housing or nursing homes
- Youth-centered community health care
- Foster care
- Addiction Treatment Centre
- Hospital
- AA meetings / Narcotics
- Anonymous meetings

### Participants / Substance
- Teenagers
- Young people
- High school students / College students
- Young tourists
- Elderly people
- At-risk groups
- Youth with risk factors
- Children from methamphetamine-involved families
- African American
- African American women
- American Indians
- Alaskan Native youth
- Marginalized groups
- AA members / Narcotics
- Anonymous members

**Countries** (Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Iran, UK, USA)

**Result/Effects:** Authors’ main findings
## INTERCONNECTEDNESS: EXAMPLE I

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### INTERCONNECTEDNESS: EXAMPLE II

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Accounts of experiences in digital storytelling</em> Houston et al. (2011)</td>
<td><em>Pilot project and evaluation</em> Houston et al. (2011)</td>
<td><em>Hospital</em> / African American / Tobacco Houston et al. (2011). USA</td>
<td>Success relative to gathering narratives to be mapped to behavioral constructions (Houston, 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Cherrington et al. (2015)</em></td>
<td><em>Randomized controlled trial</em> Cherrington et al. (2015)</td>
<td><em>USA</em></td>
<td>Insufficient as an independent intervention (Cherrington et al., 2015).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Constructing meanings that revolve around consumer practices.

- Detecting the culturally shared meanings surrounding consumer practices from a generational perspective.
- Analyzing their implications for consumption itself.
- Considering socially isolated and disadvantaged groups.
- Developing culturally adapted interventions.
  - Encouraging positive cultural identity.
  - Developing a culturally sensitive intervention involving disadvantaged groups.
  - Adding evidence-based interventions with local narrative traditions.
  - Participants are seen as active producers of the educational content.

Exploring how telling personal and community-based stories are an important part of change processes in mutual help groups.

Reconstructing group identity and in reinterpreting shared problems (interpersonal). Transformative storytelling at community narrative levels.
Stories are a gateway to health intervention efforts and particularly when working with marginalized communities

Narratives should be based on strengths and capabilities to encourage active and positive development.

- They follow a clearly cause and effect trajectory.
- It is necessary to consider the role in self-reflection on personal and social identity.
- These stories enable a critical assessment of negative consequences.
- The stories remain tied to the context in which they occur.
- It is necessary to consider the potential injustices that this process entails in marginalized groups.

Narratives act as motivators that go beyond the intrapersonal impact that the storytelling process itself generates.

- The process of sharing positive accounts of personal lives in mutual help contexts turns into persuasive stories at an intrapersonal level, an interpersonal level, and at the level of the community’s own social structure.
CONCLUSION

Limitations:
Using the term storytelling as the only search descriptor, excluding other possible related terms such as narrative communication

Diversity of the selected studies: not exclusively implementation or effectiveness studies

Future line of research:
Determining the effectiveness of the storytelling-based strategy as a mechanism for change by eliciting the identification with history. This is especially relevant with specific groups (low resources, at risk groups, ethnic groups...) because they enhance their own personal stories of improvement.
Everyone has a history to tell

Thank you!!!