

### **Understanding the Types of Opioid Abusers**

The use of typologies, i.e. the differentiation of groups that share commonalities, can be a useful approach for classification. Classification of substance use disorders can be made along several dimensions such as epidemiological, neurobiological, sociological, genetic and clinical. Toward defining these subgroups, choosing the proper methodological approach becomes of vital importance.

Developing a reliable and valid model that is testable must be the ultimate goal of defining subtypes of any disease state, including that of opioid abuse and dependence. The product of sub-group analysis provides a better understanding of outcomes that may facilitate treatment-matching, help to predict the course and prognosis of the substance use disorder as well as to delineate etiology. For example, multivariate classifications in alcoholism have been suggested by Cloninger et al. (1981), Babor et al (1992), Lesch et al (1996) and most recently by Moss et al (in press); the importance of such typology in alcohol dependence has led to targeted pharmacotherapeutic interventions for early and late-onset alcoholics, and therapeutic interventions such as medical management.

The goal of this summit is to discuss the important known dimensions of opioid subtypes as well as methods and mechanisms involved with classification while keeping in mind a clinical classification schema suggested by Schnoll et al. (2007) as an initial point of discussion. Speakers will present data associated with various known subtypes of opioids abusers and how these subtypes correlate with the clinical typology suggested. The outcome of this meeting is to:

- Provide a basis for how opioid abusing patients can be classified;
- Identify the implications of this classification effort for interventions
- Discuss how a systematic approach to classification can compel revisions in classification systems based on more anecdotal or casual observations; and
- Describe the challenges to researchers and clinicians in moving our knowledge forward with the most appropriate methodological approach to best target specific opioid subtypes with appropriately matched interventions.

### Relevant Literature:

- Babor TF et al. Types of alcoholics: I. Evidence for an empirically-derived typology based on indicators of vulnerability and severity. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 1992. 8, 599-608.
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