European Addiction Research: A New Journal

M.		Krausz
A.		Uchtenhagen

Dear reader,

Why should there be a new scientific journal on addiction research?

There is nothing wrong with what we already have. A growing number of journals, newsletters and abstracts, directed to various target groups and with diverse aims and objectives, take care of information exchange on scientific progress. Not all the interested parties have sufficient funds to subscribe to those journals which are already on the market.

So again: Why a new scientific journal on addiction research? What do we want?

There is a clear answer: The European scene and perspectives are changing rapidly. In the course of the last few years, a number of national research plans have been developed and implemented in the field of substance abuse and substance dependence. A new generation of highly specialised research centres and institutes has been established, and more will be coming.

Despite all past efforts, substance abuse problems are at the forefront of political and public concern. There is growing insight into the complexity and ramifications of those problems, and a waning trust

in lop-sided and simplified responses to the challenge. The enormous amount of resources spent on substance abuse problems at all levels asks for an intensified rational analysis of what is going on and what is being done. Dogmatic positions are less and less acceptable, and future intervention policies need a solid factual basis. A large range of neglected or not sufficiently explored research areas have to be dealt with. Better understanding of risk factors to be considered, better knowledge on the mechanisms involved, and better answers to questions such as 'What works for whom and under what circumstances?' are needed.

And still, this is not enough. The integrative political and economic trends in a unified Europe, and their discrepancies with regional traditions and interests, are mirrored in merging substance abuse patterns, self-medication and other drug-related lifestyles, interrelated drug scenes and other phenomena. All this calls for co-ordinated action, which clashes at times with regional and local differences and especially with the different needs of urban and non-urban milieus.

Substance abuse and addiction research then has a new perspective, focusing on shared research plans, instruments and

protocols, indispensable for collaborative and comparative scientific activities.

More systematised research and research planning are asked for, which implies closer collaboration across the borders. The implementation of a European Monitoring Centre on Drugs and Drug Addiction is a powerful and highly visible consequence of this necessity.

Such a development creates needs. More money will need to be invested in research, more qualified papers will have to be published, more reviews of national research activities are requested, more networking among researchers in Europe and abroad is necessary, more scientific exchange in addition to the publishing of research material is needed.

This is what the new initiative and the new journal are all about. The concept for the new journal includes a number of features with the aim of serving various purposes:

- The special topic section characterises the journal. It permits joint publications, state-of-the-art reports and original research reports on topics of specific interest. The focus of each issue will be announced well in advance so that offers of papers can be planned ahead accordingly. In this journal you will find the topics of the special topic sections for the following four issues. Our idea is to focus interest and present special topics on real interdisciplinary aspects as seen from different European perspectives.

To promote scientific discussion, a 'controversy section' is also planned. There is no thesis without antithesis, no clarity without controversy. But, nevertheless, discussion with a degree of controversy is quite rare in a lot of scientific journals and any kind of dialogue or discussion does not seem to be easy to organise.

Activity reports on addiction research in individual countries or centres give updated information and facilitate useful direct contacts with researchers.

Translated summaries and reports on research which has not been published in English facilitate the access to quality research which is otherwise restricted to publication in national journals. Systematic announcement and reviews on relevant events help researchers to remain up to date. The focus on European activities and perspectives helps researchers on other continents to be informed and to establish direct international contacts.

Summarised reports from non-European countries and research centres sustain this process of spontaneous networking.

The journal is also open to other innovative approaches, such as organising special research seminars

and training courses, or implementing a diskette-exchange scheme for manuscripts and other material. The overall idea, apart from providing adequate space for high-quality research, is to actively provide opportunities for scientific networking, complementing the official channels. A particularly important aspect is interdisciplinarity: existing networks in the areas of biomedical, psychosocial and economic research, amongst others, should have access to relevant information from other networks in order to make their choices for new contacts, in view of the growing necessity for interdisciplinary scientific collaboration.

A qualified research community throughout Europe will be facilitated through this new initiative, and all parties interested in contributing to this process are invited to participate and make this effort a success.