

Editorial

Axel Klein, Aysel Sultan and Blaine Stothard

In this issue

This issue is the first to benefit from the recent added presence of Dr Aysel Sultan on the editorial team. Earlier this year, Aysel guest edited a special issue “Beyond Prescription Drugs for the journal along with Aleksu Hupli, a PhD student at the University of Tampere, Finland. Aysel was awarded her doctorate from Goethe University, Frankfurt, in 2019, and is now a post-doctoral researcher at the Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences and a fellow at the University of Haifa. We are pleased to welcome Aysel and her experience in social drug research to the team and are already benefitting from her energy and ideas.

Our first regular issue this year has a rich variety of papers and authors, with two dominant themes: learning from the past; and alcohol. Two papers look back to reassess practice and policy to see if the texts and research on which they were based were valid at the time of their writing; and if they have lessons from which policy and decision-makers, if not practitioners, could still benefit.

Toby Seddon revisits the 1980s’ addiction classic “Heroin Addiction” and the UK’s clinic system which it describes. Still unresolved and contested are the arguments around abstinence and maintenance.

Iain McPhee and Barry Sheridan look at successive AUDIT Scotland reports and conclude that the findings regarding the links between drug-related deaths and socio-economic inequalities have not been accompanied by corresponding funding and resources – a situation which applies to the whole of the UK.

Both papers emphasise the need for continued provision of harm reduction inputs and strategies, however, politically unpopular this might be.

Linda Somerville, Betsy Thom and Rachel Herring examine the role and presence of public health in licencing decisions to determine how far this 2011 responsibility has been used and acted on. The professional tensions around public health participation are demonstrated in many ways, from hostility to engagement. It seems that the role and contributions of public health more broadly are not fully accepted in all inter-disciplinary environments or “partnerships”.

Next, Beverley Love looks at understandings and research around recovery amongst substance-using offenders. Research reminds us of the influence of early (i.e. childhood) psycho-social experiences and relationships on later substance use and that the addictive potential of a substance is an insufficient explanation of substance use and response. The paper also raises once again the question of access to and use of research by practitioners to inform their work.

Rachel Herring’s paper on fathers and substance use provides some additional insights into early childhood experiences and subsequent substance using behaviours.

Ediomo-Ubong Ekpo Nelson and Macpherson Uchenna Nnam discuss the contextual determinants of HIV risk among people who inject drugs in public settings in Nigeria, based on interviews with people from this grouping. Their findings remind us of the impact that policing practices and wider stigma have on the health and well-being of people who use drugs, and the lack of acceptance in some disciplines and jurisdictions on harm reduction

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and the prevention of transmission of blood-borne viruses. While the geographical setting is Nigeria, the situations and conclusions drawn remain relevant for much of the “Western” world, where harm reduction practices remain contested and fragile.

In the final paper of the issue, Vibeke Asmussen-Frank, Sarah McLean and Maria Herold explore the contexts around the recent reported increases in the use of nitrous oxide amongst young people in several European nations. Together with possible explanations, they also look at the potential health issues and the role which public health and information campaigns might play in assisting those young people who are the principal users of nitrous oxide to do so with minimal risk to health and well-being.

We hope that the variety and quality of this issue will be of interest and value to our readership and represent a diversity of authorship which we have every intention of maintaining and extending.

Drugs and Alcohol Today is participating in the activities of the International Society of Addiction Journal Editors through Blaine Stothard’s place on the current (2020 for three years) ISAJE Board. One theme under discussion is diversity, with a sub-theme of how, if at all, the COVID-19 restrictions may have affected diversity of authorship of papers published in the journals represented at ISAJE (Hellman *et al.*, 2020 for a review). There are as yet unresolved discussions at ISAJE on what is understood by diversity and how it might be monitored. We have initially been looking at diversity (of sex and ethnicity) within editorial teams, similar diversity of published authors and geographical diversity.

We, at *Drugs and Alcohol Today* (watch for a change of title soon), have identified no substantive gaps in the diversity of authors of papers submitted and published, and we are pleased that our geographical reach continues to grow.

Reference

Hellman, M., Kaupilla, E., Katainen, A., Kettunen, T., Saitz, R. and Calver, K. (2020), “Diversity in addiction publishing”, *International Journal of Drug Policy*, Vol. 82, doi: [10.1016/j.drugpo.2020.102788](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2020.102788).

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