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Implications of an Alcohol Addiction RDoC for Delivery Science Research and Clinical Care

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LITTEN AND COLLEAGUES (2015). have set out a range of compelling issues with implications not only for neurobiology and genetics, but for health services research and clinical informatics as well. Developing a research framework for alcohol use disorders that is adapted from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) Research Domain Criteria (RDoC) is an important step and would be most impactful if it can include large, heterogeneous populations, developmental and environmental domains, and broader outcome measures. The optimal research settings would be health systems with electronic health records where longitudinal health data can be combined with neurobiological, genetic, and environmental data from research studies. At least as a start, much could be learned using a “big data” approach to examine large numbers of individuals to identify developmental patterns of addiction and remission and thereby target potential research participants.

For health systems to be interested in participating in this research, and for it to be truly useful, the proposed alcohol addiction measures should include those that allow clinicians to make personalized care decisions based on patient characteristics that are easily available directly from patients or from their medical records—thus linking phenotypic data with findings from the proposed research domains. Combining the proposed research with new clinical informatics

approaches in health care, where physicians and researchers can compare outcomes of targeted patient characteristics based on different treatments received, could complement the proposed research. These could occur in parallel.

A related and important concern is the need to include developmental aspects and interactions with the environment as critical elements in any future alcohol use disorder research framework. These are mentioned by Litten and colleagues (2015), but not as core elements. NIMH has been criticized for minimizing these clinically relevant areas, and a strong case can be made that this is even more important in the addictions field. The framework should include research to improve treatment access for the population, strengthen resiliency in the community, and take into account affordability and the outcomes important to consumers and other stakeholders of health care. These considerations should be conceptualized and developed simultaneously with the more biologically based focus of the proposal by Litten and colleagues (2015) for an Alcohol Addiction RDoC.

REFERENCES

- Litten RZ, Ryan ML, Falk DE, Reilly M, Fertig JB, Koob GF (2015) Heterogeneity of alcohol use disorder: understanding mechanisms to advance personalized treatment. *Alcohol Clin Exp Res* 39:579–584.

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