

Course ID: CMEC28

Alcohol dependence

Course director: Karl Mann

Teaching faculty: A. Heinz, I. Crome

Educational Objectives: The course will enable psychiatrists to diagnose alcohol abuse and dependence, to use brief intervention, to apply current scientific discoveries in the best interest of the patients, and to support their efforts to be respected like subjects suffering from other diseases.

Course description: The past one hundred years witnessed the formation of a disease concept of alcoholism and a rapid increase in the knowledge of its etiopathology and treatment options. The current disease concept includes the psychosocial and neurobiological foundations and consequences of alcoholism. Neurobiological research points to the dispositional factor of monoaminergic dysfunction and neuroadaptation and sensitisation may play a role in the maintenance of addictive behaviour. New treatment options include pharmacological approaches and indicate that behaviour and motivational therapy and the attendance of patient groups may equally reduce the relapse risk.

In this course, current findings regarding the disposition and maintenance of alcohol dependence will be presented and their relevance for prevention and treatment will be discussed. Brief intervention, that can be carried out in non-specialised settings, will be introduced and case vignettes will be used to teach the practical procedure. We will then proceed to describe the mode of action of the main pharmacological drugs that reduce the relapse risk among alcoholics. These additional pharmacological treatment options will be discussed in the context of holistic treatment approaches that include self-organised patient groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, specialised psychotherapy or longer-lasting treatment programs. The course will enable psychiatrists to apply scientific discoveries in the best interest of the patients and to support their efforts to be respected like subjects suffering from other diseases.

Target audience: Psychiatrists.

Course level: Basic general psychiatry.