

The recent discussions on 'real alcoholics' reminded me of the following study and I thought I would share it with you. Hope it 'fits' the AA History Lovers essence.

I have wondered for some years about the referral rate and criteria for referral to AA. Additionally, I have questioned the reported incidence of alcoholism in the general population.

A study in 2004 that compared alcohol dependence and alcohol abuse found that up to a third of alcoholics did not abuse alcohol. That is a third of alcoholics did not drink at the damaging levels decided by health authorities (often defined as above 3 drinks a day for men and 2 drinks a day for women).

If these alcoholics are not being identified by generally accepted questionnaires to identify alcohol dependence then they are not being referred for treatment or AA. The same report makes that very point.

The study; Hasin DS, Grant BF. (2004) The co-occurrence of DSM-IV alcohol abuse in DSM-IV alcohol dependence. Arch Gen Psychiatry. 2004 Sep;61(9):891-6. RESULTS: Among respondents with current alcohol dependence, 33.7% did not additionally meet criteria for alcohol abuse (29.0% among men and 46.1% among women).

This is confirmation that what AA says; Its not what, where, how much or who with; it's the effect that alcohol has that defines alcoholism.

Perhaps the 'success' rates of AA and the referral rates are being affected by healthcare workers assessing 'alcohol abuse' as alcoholism and not using the AA criteria - thus inflating referral rates to AA. An alcohol abuser (non-alcoholic) is unlikely to identify with AA members. This has all sorts of implications for perceptions of AA.

The Big Book states; "To be gravely affected, one does not necessarily have to drink a long time nor take the quantities some of us have. This is particularly true of women. Potential female alcoholics often turn into the real thing and are gone beyond recall in a few years." (AA, pp 33).

If the above is kept in mind perhaps we would reach some of the others who are not now being referred to AA.

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