Substance abuse among Doctors in Germany

- Problem-size and Interventions -
Number of doctors in Germany with a substance use problem
Number of doctors in Germany with a substance use problem

Up to now no valid German studies are available
North-American Research Results:

USA
Hughes et al. 1992
9,600 Doctors
– written questionnaire

- Alcohol abuse / -dependency
  - life-time: 6.0%
  - within last 12 mth.: 1.6%

- Drug-abuse / -dependency
  - life-time: 3.7%
  - within last 12 mth.: 0.7%

- Benzodiazepine-Consumption
  - life-time: 24.0%
  - within last 12 mth.: 13.6%

- Overall prevalence of Substance abuse / dependency
  - life-time: 7.9%
  - within last 12 mth.: 2.1%
North-American Research Results:

Canada
Brewster 1994
N = 1,500 doctors

- "heavy drinkers"*  6.0%
- Regular use of Benzodiazepine °  7.5%
- Occasional use of cocain  0.2%
- daily smokers  <10.0%

* = more than 4 alcoholic drinks per occasion resp. more than 60 drinks / month,
° = more than 1x / month
## North-American Research Results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Description</th>
<th>Lifetime-Prevalence</th>
<th>Point-Prevalence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US-study (Hughes)</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian study (Brewster)</td>
<td>o.A.</td>
<td>6% - 7.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Number of physicians in Germany with a substance use problem

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substance</th>
<th>Doctors (%)</th>
<th>Overall Population (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>4-5% (estimated)</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal drugs</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smokers</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benzodiazepine</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Out of 333,600 practicing physicians

⇒ **15,000 doctors** in Germany with a substance use problem (estimated value)
Consumed Substances:

- 50% Alcohol
- 28% Alcohol + Prescription Drugs
- 6% Prescription Drugs
- 6% Narcotic Drugs
- 10% Multiple Drug-use

(B. Mäulen 2003 - Oberberg-Hospital: Admission-Data)
Reasons for substance abuse among doctors
Reasons for Substance-Abuse among Doctors

- Work stress
- Daily confrontation with suffering patients
- Helplessness
- Exaggerated expectations of self and others
- Easy access to addictive prescription medicine

Internal? External?
Therapy Barriers

- Reality-loss due to dependency
- Fear of stigmatization
- Doctor as patient-problem
- Fear of professional and economic consequences

Internal?    External?
Legal framework for interventions
State Licensing Authority

- Registration and issuance of medical licenses
- Decision on license suspension
- Decision on license revocation

Chamber of Physicians

- Registration of all doctors
- Professional code and supervision of the profession
- Ethical standards for doctors
- Disciplinary measures and proceedings

Registration bodies for Statutory Health Insurance Physicians

- Accreditation of physicians for participation in Statutory Healthcare
- Revocation of accreditation
Legal Framework

1. Federal Ordinance on Doctors (Bundesärzteordnung)

Revocation of license (§5(2) i. V. §3(1), Satz 1, Nr. 2 + 3 Bundesärzteordnung)
- when doctor shows unworthy and unreliable behavior,
- when showing physical or mental handicaps regarding proper professional performance.

Suspension of license (§6(1) in connection with §3(1), Satz 1, Nr. 2 + 3)
- due to loss of physical or mental abilities limiting his/her professional performance,
- when physical or mental abilities are challenged and a respective health-examination had been refused.
2. Law on the statutory health insurance

- Regulations for statutory health insurance accredited physicians -

§95 (6) SGB V (Sozialgesetzbuch V)

„A doctor`s accreditation can be revoked, when its prerequisites do no longer apply, … or contracted obligations have profoundly been violated.“

§21 Regulation on the registration of statutory health insurance doctors (Ärzte-Zulassungsverordnung)

„If a doctor is suffering from severe mental or other internal deficiencies and therefore unsuitable to serve as a statutory health insurance physician, in particular when he / she has fallen sick by a substance dependency within the last 5 years before his application for accreditation, his / her accreditation has to be revoked.“
Notification of Chambers of Physicians regarding physicians with a substance use problem
Number of notifications:

nation wide 50 – 70 notifications p.a.
(ca. 80% confirmed)

Substance use related license revocations:

< 20 cases p.a.
(estimates of Chambers of Physicians)
Who notifies the Chambers of Physicians?

1. Notification by law enforcement authorities (MiStra - Notification)
2. Patients
3. Staff / colleagues
4. Pharmacies
5. Anonymous notifications
6. Relatives
7. Personal notification
8. License Authorities
9. others
Available means of intervention
Chambers of Physicians` responses to notifications received

Conflict of interest

- Monitoring of professional duties and conduct
- Quality assurance / Patients` safety

Sanctions

- safeguarding doctors` welfare

Support
Recommenations on handling physicians with a substance use problem by the German Medical Association - 2006 -
1. Installation of a contact bureau (Kontaktstelle)

- to receive, document and validate notifications
- to contact incriminated physicians, communication on charges
- to initiate diagnostics needed
- to inform on therapeutic facilities, potential support by chamber of physicians, sanctions if non-compliant
- to conclude a written agreement
- to set up necessary arrangements with State Licensing Authority
Persons to contact within Chambers of Physicians
- online list -

Interventionsprogramme der Landesärztekammern für suchtkranke Ärztinnen und Ärzte


Ansprechpartner für Betroffene bei den Landesärztekammern:

Bündnis der Landesärztekammern

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Bayrische Landesärztekammer

Anfragen zu berufsrechtlichen Fragestellungen beantwortet das
Redaktionsbüro der Bayerischen Landesärztekammer
Mohlsbaurstraße 10
80337 München
Telefon: 089 4147-220
Telefax: 089 4147-750
E-Mail: berufsrecht@blzk.de

Auskünfte über psychotherapeutische Behandlungsmöglichkeiten erteilt die Bayerische Ärztliche Berufsgenossenschaft
Hier Diplomed (Mo. bis Fr. ganztags) / Frau Wolf (Mo., Di., Mi. 9 bis 12 Uhr)
Denninger Straße 37
80125 München
Telefon: 089 9235-8862 / 089 9235-8873
Telefax: --
E-Mail: --
2. Nomination of Physicians of Confidence

- to be contacted by the doctor as a confidential expert
- to accompany and monitor the therapeutic process
- to provide support regarding occupational, legal and personal matters
- to communicate with therapist
- to notify Chamber of Physicians when therapy has failed
3. Workplace related support by Chambers of Physicians

- provision of a substitute
- legal aid
- support funds
Steps of intervention in structured programs

1. Notification of a suspected substance use problem
2. Interview with doctor
3. Diagnosis on substance use disorder
4. Written agreement on therapeutic and control measures and sanctions
5. Inpatient / outpatient therapy
6. Follow-up program

Report to State Licensing Authority
Chambers of Physicians with a structured intervention program
– survey results Jan. 2009 –

- in existence: in 10 out of 17 chambers
- in stage of development: 2 chambers
- non-existent: 5 chambers
Problems still to be solved:

- Intervention programs in all chambers
- Procedural rules for interaction with State Licensing Authority
- Transparent procedures for assumption of therapy costs by physicians’ pension funds
- Assumption of therapy costs by private health insurance plans
- Amendment of the „Regulation on the registration of statutory health insurance doctors“
Thank you for your attention!
➢ Number of doctors in Germany with a substance use problem
➢ Reasons for substance abuse among doctors
➢ Legal framework for interventions
➢ Notification of Chambers of Physicians regarding physicians with a substance use problem
➢ Available means of intervention
➢ Problems to be solved
Number of physicians in Germany

Total: 333,600 physicians

- 141,500 ambulatory care
- 163,600 inpatient care
- 18,800 other areas
- 9,700 non-clinical

3.5 physicians per 1,000 inhabitants
Number of physicians in Germany with a substance use problem

Study on Consumption of alcohol, cigarettes and illegal substances among doctors in private practice in the States of Brandenburg and Saxony (N = 642)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>male doctors</th>
<th>female doctors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harmful drinking</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(&gt;60g/d resp. &gt;40g/d)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazardous drinking</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(&gt;40g/d resp. &gt;20g/d)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bundesärztekammer
Arbeitsgemeinschaft der deutschen Ärztekammern
Number of physicians in Germany with a substance use problem

Study on stress-related consumption of alcohol and/or prescription drugs among doctors – anonymous online-questionnaire, (N = 1.287)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>„Consume alcohol and/or prescribed drugs to reduce work-related stress“</th>
<th>Partly true</th>
<th>true for most occasions</th>
<th>Agree strongly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doctors (male and female, all disciplines)</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Geuenich K (2009)
Prävalenz von Abhängigkeitserkrankungen in der Ärzteschaft im Vgl. zur Bevölkerung

- Alkohol: 4,5% (Ärzte) vs. 4,7% (Bevölkerung)
- illegale Drogen: 0,7% (Ärzte) vs. 0,9% (Bevölkerung)
- Benzodiazepine: 13,6% (Ärzte) vs. 16,8% (Bevölkerung)
- täglicher Tabakkonsum: 34,8% (Ärzte) vs. 25% (Bevölkerung)