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VOLUNTARY VS INVOLUNTARY

Research summary from the Journal of Substance
Abuse Treatment

Voluntary, Forced Treatment Equally Effective, NIDA Says

Summary

Men ordered into drug treatment by judges had as much success as those who entered treatment voluntarily, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA).

Those entering treatment by court order initially were less motivated than voluntary participants, but after five years, rates of abstinence, employment, and rearrest were about the same, according to an analysis conducted by NIDA and the Department of Veterans Affairs Health Service Research and Development Service.

“Once in a therapeutic environment, mandated patients seem to reflect on their situation and accept the need for treatment,” said lead researcher John Kelly. “Our findings suggest that people can learn from the ‘teachable moment’ offered by a judicial mandate, even though the initial motivation for treatment is external. Judicial mandates may provide an opportunity for offenders to gain access to and benefit from needed treatment.”

Researchers studied outcomes on 2,095 men treated at 15 VA inpatient programs for 21 to 28 days, using a variety of interventions. Assessments were done at intake, one year, and five years after treatment. At five years out, most outcomes did not differ between the mandated and voluntary groups.

- The research was published in the April 2005 issue of the [Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment](#)
- “Court-Mandated Treatment Works as Well as Voluntary.” National Institute on Drug Abuse, 1 Jul. 2006, <https://archives.drugabuse.gov/news-events/nida-notes/2006/07/court-mandated-treatment-works-well-voluntary>



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