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What works in recovery? Alcohol and other drug professionals
lived experiences of addiction, treatment and recovery in New
Zealand.

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Abstract

The New Zealand Government's health surveys consistently identify that alcohol and other drug (AOD) addiction is an issue for New Zealanders. However, there is a lack of qualitative research on the lived experiences of people who have previously or currently experience AOD addiction in New Zealand. This research provides insight into the factors that contribute to, and create barriers to, successful AOD addiction recovery. The qualitative method of constructivism was the approach used to conduct the research. Eight participants took part in semi-structured interviews, sharing their stories in a narrative style and recounting experiences from the time their addictions began, their entry into AOD addiction recovery and their entry into the AOD workforce. Interview transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis, themes were identified that highlighted what contributed to participant's successful AOD addiction recovery and what created barriers to AOD addiction recovery. Nine themes emerged through the data analysis process these were: stigma; defining your own recovery; reconstruction of the self; the role of social learning; opportunities for career progression; specific populations including youth, people with co-existing mental health and AOD addiction issues, women, and families; strengths and limitations of the health, social service and AOD workforce; addiction and the law; and barriers to accessing AOD support services. A consistent finding across these nine themes was that the barriers to AOD addiction recovery in New Zealand experienced by the research participants were systemic, and preventable. The recommendations of this thesis are that the barriers to recovery, and contributors to successful recovery identified in this research are addressed; in particular the themes of stigma and systemic barriers to wellbeing.

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