**INTRODUCTION**

Addiction to drugs and/or alcohol is a compound mental health problem that is typically correlated with challenges in several aspects of life, such as homelessness, unemployment, interpersonal conflicts, involvement with the criminal justice system, and psychological and physiological comorbidity. One recovery-oriented treatment environment that has been prominent in facilitating positive change for those struggling with addiction to substances is known as a therapeutic community (TC). A therapeutic community can be defined as a residential setting that emulates a miniature society in which clients and staff acquire specific roles and adhere to clear rules, all intended to foster the transitional process for clients; self-help and mutual help are both pillars of this therapeutic process. While there has been extensive research conducted on TCs for this population, the evidence base for the efficacy of TCs is limited according to the literature. This review aims to identify the efficacy of therapeutic communities for individuals recovering from addiction to substances as well as highlight the state of the literature.

**METHODS**

A literature review was conducted to investigate the long-term effectiveness of TCs on sustained sobriety and improvements to various life domains. Articles were identified using Elsevier, ProQuest, and PsychInfo and search terms included: addiction, therapeutic communities, and effectiveness. The literature revealed 16 original longitudinal studies having been conducted on TCs, with the oldest stemming from the 1980s. Only empirical articles published between 2010 and 2020 were included, with the exception of an empirical book published in 2001.

**RESULTS**

The majority of studies followed up with participants between 6 and 24 months with a few having followed participants for longer than 36 months. In these studies, within-group reduction between baseline and follow-up evaluations in “substance use” and “criminal involvement” demonstrated less severity. Two years following TC treatment, the long-term outcomes found in 5 of the 16 studies showed significantly improved legal outcomes, while only 3 studies demonstrated significantly lower levels of substance use. Additional identified factors that positively influenced treatment efficacy included completing treatment, participation in aftercare, posttreatment employment, older age of abstinence, and absence of rearrest.

**DISCUSSION**

Results in treatment outcome literature demonstrate substantial methodological issues that impede clinicians understanding of treatment efficacy for the addiction population. Problematically, the literature is also characterized by limitations regarding inconsistencies of the specific life domains assessed and the varied timeframe for follow-ups, as well as samples from outdated studies. There is also a lack of research regarding the applicability to diverse clients coming from a multitude of backgrounds. Lastly, further research should also incorporate the utilization of this treatment modality with individuals having psychiatric comorbidities.

**REFERENCES**


