

Addiction & the Family

Two hundred people attended a conference on **Addiction & the Family** in Bristol on November 21st, 2008. This meeting was one of series that Moira Plant and Martin Plant and their colleagues have arranged over the past 30 years. This event, like many of the previous meetings, was supported by the Alcohol Education & Research Council (AERC). These meetings are held in order to provide information and to facilitate discussion on topical and important subjects. Recent conferences have focused on *Drinking During Pregnancy, Binge Drinking, Young People and Alcohol* and *Addictive Behaviours*. AERC support has enabled the registration fees (including student discounts) for these events to be kept down to rates that are affordable for many people in the “alcohol field.”

The number of families across the world affected by addiction (including alcohol, drugs, gambling, and many other ‘excessive appetites’) is huge. Families, and individual members of those families, can be, and often are, affected in a plethora of ways, with addiction negatively impacting upon communication, roles, responsibilities and dynamics within those families. Amongst those most affected are children, where there are often major impacts on their health, well-being, and development. On the other hand, not all children are so badly affected, and there has been increasing interest in resilience: the fact that some children who have upbringings which are predicted to cause them major problems are not as badly affected as expected, and may even be strengthened by their experiences. **Addiction and the Family** was arranged jointly by the Alcohol & Health Research Unit at the University of the West of England, Bristol and the Mental Health Research & Development Unit (MHRDU), a joint unit of the University of Bath and Avon & Wiltshire Partnership Mental Health NHS Trust. This meeting brought together leading authorities on issues related to addiction and the family.

The speakers included leading psychologists, psychiatrists, alcohol counsellors and social scientists from across the UK, Europe and the USA. They reviewed how addiction impacts on family members across the lifespan, and the implications for treatment and practice of ideas such as resilience, and more family-involving ways of working with those with addiction problems. A substantial amount of the research described has been supported by the AERC. This includes the research into alcohol and the family that has been conducted by Professors Jim Orford and Alex

Copello in the University of Birmingham and Professor Richard Velleman and Ms Lorna Templeton in the University of Bath. In addition the AERC-supported GENACIS and ESPAD surveys were cited in relation to both alcohol consumption and amongst young people and drinking by older people. The latter work is being conducted at the University of the West of England, Bristol.

The Keynote speaker was Professor Tim O'Farrell one of the leading proponents worldwide of Behavioural Couples Therapy, one of only two treatments for Drug Problems which the recent NICE review stated was an evidence-based treatment of choice. There is clearly a significant demand for these events. The next meeting, on **Youth, Alcohol & Crime** is due to take place on November 13th, 2009.



Conference Speakers
photo by Liza McCarron of UWE

Further details of Youth, Alcohol & Crime may be obtained from:
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