

AA* Insights for Enhanced Care:

Little-Known Facts to Support Your Patients

*Alcoholics Anonymous

- Founded in 1935
- International organization that provides peer to peer mutual aid by those with lived experience
- Helping individuals recover from alcohol addiction or alcohol use disorder (AUD) and maintain sobriety

Key features:

- emphasis on anonymity
- non-hierarchical structure
- inclusive approach



Twelve Steps:

- Guiding principles and spiritual concepts outline a path to recovery
- Encourage self-reflection, acceptance of one's powerlessness over alcohol, making amends, and spiritual growth
- Support of a sponsor, a more experienced member who provides guidance and accountability

AA meetings:

- Primary forum for members to gather, share, and support each other
- Held in various locations, including community centers, churches, and online platforms
- Open to anyone who has a desire to stop drinking

AA has inspired the development of similar mutual aid groups for individuals struggling with addiction to other substances, such as Narcotics Anonymous (NA) for drug addiction, and other 12-step programs for various behavioral addictions.

Overall, AA serves as a vital resource for individuals seeking support and guidance in their journey toward sobriety and recovery from alcohol addiction.

By highlighting these key points, healthcare professionals can better understand the benefits of suggesting AA as part of a comprehensive approach to addressing alcohol addiction in their patients.

Benefits of AA

- **All roads lead to recovery:** AA welcomes all recovery including those whose recovery includes medication
- **Support Network:** supportive community, sense of belonging and companionship
- **Peer Support:** shared experience = empathy, understanding, and encouragement
- **Structured Program:** 12-step approach is a roadmap for recovery-- self-reflection, acceptance, personal growth
- **Anonymity:** safe space for sharing without judgment or repercussions
- **Holistic Approach:** addressing physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual dimensions
- **Long-Term Support:** many members continue to attend meetings after sobriety
- **Accessible Meetings:** widespread and accessible in various locations / times
- **Complementary to Treatment:** complement therapy or medication by reinforcing recovery principles
- **Positive Outcomes:** participation in AA leads to improved outcomes -- abstinence, psychological well-being, overall quality of life
- **Cost-Effective:** AA is typically free to attend
- **Self-empowerment:** AA encourages individuals to take responsibility for their recovery journey

While many healthcare professionals may recognize the potential benefits of suggesting Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) to individuals struggling with alcohol use, there are also reasons why some health care providers may hesitate to offer it to their patients as a recovery support option. **Here are several factors that may influence their decision:**

Understanding Biases about Offering AA

- **Evidence-Based Concerns:** *lack of empirical evidence* compared to other treatments
- **Secularism:** *spiritual component* in 12-step program may conflict with beliefs or preferences
- **One-Size-Fits-All Approach:** *structured program* may not resonate with all individuals
- **Accessibility Issues:** *potentially not easily accessible* (e.g. location, transportation, scheduling)
- **Professional Bias:** *personal biases or negative perceptions* about AA or 12-step programs
- **Limited Scope:** *may prefer comprehensive treatment approaches* that address multifaceted nature of addiction instead of only sobriety through abstinence
- **Co-occurring Disorders:** some prioritize treatments that *address both substance use and co-occurring disorders*, such as depression, anxiety, or trauma-related disorders
- **Stigma Concerns:** some still perceive AA as *stigmatizing or marginalizing individuals*
- **Legal and Ethical Considerations:** legal or ethical concerns about *endorsing specific treatment modalities*
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** AA's cultural context and language may not resonate with individuals from *diverse cultural or ethnic backgrounds* or those with neurodiversity or invisible disabilities

By understanding these key aspects of AA, healthcare professionals can provide informed guidance to their patients struggling with alcohol use and help them make informed decisions about incorporating AA into their recovery journey or finding the approach that best meets their individual needs and preferences.

References and Resources

- <https://www.aa.org/>
- <https://www.al-anon.org>
- <https://smartrecovery.org>
- <https://www.recoveryanswers.org/research-post/update-evidence-alcoholics-anonymous-participation/>
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