

The Combined Addiction Disease Chronologies of William White, MA, Ernest Kurtz, PhD, and Caroline Acker, PhD*

Introduction

In 1998, the Illinois General Assembly called upon the Illinois Department of Human Service's Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse to create a Behavioral Health Recovery Management (BHRM) project. The purpose of this project was to explore the application of principles and service technologies developed in the management of chronic primary illnesses to the management of severe and persistent addiction and/or mental illness. Because the fields of mental health and addiction treatment have very different histories related to the use of "disease" concepts and different approaches to "disease management," the BHRM project began by constructing the history and controversies surrounding these concepts. This document is one of the products of that investigation.

The annotated history that follows integrates the independent work of three historians in the addiction/recovery arenas. The lead author incorporated items from an existing unpublished chronology of Ernest Kurtz and contracted with Caroline Acker to provide assistance in constructing a chronology of the application of the disease concept to the problem of narcotic addiction. Items from each of these chronologies are followed by either "Kurtz" or "Acker."

The goal in constructing this chronology was to trace the history of advocacy and criticism of the addiction disease concept in America. Our goal of posting the raw materials that were the products of this research is to elevate the quality of the disease concept debate by more accurately grounding this debate within its evolving historical contexts. The citations listed were not selected to support one or the other side of this debate, but to accurately depict (through their own words) the thinking of disease advocates and critics during more than 200 years of American history. While the chronology is not meant to cover all published material on this topic, it does include the bulk of such material within each historical period. We hope that the "raw notes" from our research will help guide future historians and commentators to the primary sources within this quite controversial topic.

A caution is indicated in interpreting these annotations. What you will find here is a history of ideas reflected in published literature, particularly ideas related to advocacy of or rejection of the addiction disease concept. One must be careful not to interpret a dramatic rise in oppositional literature to a professional/cultural acceptance of such criticism. When a concept has achieved dominance, arguments in support of it are no longer required. It is only when such a concept is in ascendance or under attack that such articles appear. As a dominant paradigm, its presence is implicit rather than visibly advocated.

The scope of this survey was limited primarily to writings in the United States, but the chronology does include citations of writings and discoveries from other countries where these exerted an influence on the evolution of the addiction disease concept and how it was promoted or criticized within the U.S.

William White

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- William White is a Senior Research Consultant at Chestnut Health Systems in Bloomington, Illinois. He has worked in the addiction treatment field for more than 30 years. His publications include *Slaying the Dragon: The History of Addiction Treatment and Recovery in America* and numerous articles on the history of addiction treatment and recovery.
- Ernest Kurtz, after earning his Ph.D. in the History of American Civilization from Harvard University in 1978, taught American History and the History of Religion in America at the University of Georgia and Loyola University of Chicago. He is the author of *Not-God: A History of Alcoholics Anonymous* and many articles related to the history of A.A.
- Caroline Jean Acker is associate professor of history at Carnegie Mellon University. She received her Ph.D. in the history of health sciences from the School of Medicine of the University of California, San Francisco. Her book, *Creating the American Junkie: Addiction Research in the Classic Era of Narcotic Control*, will be published by The Johns Hopkins University Press early in 2002.