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ADDICTION LIVES: ROBIN DAVIDSON

[photo]

Addiction Lives records the views and personal experiences of people who have especially contributed to the evolution of ideas in addiction science. To suggest an interviewee, send a statement of up to 50 words summarizing the person's exceptional contribution to the field to the Addiction Lives Editor: Professor Virginia Berridge, Centre for History in Public Health, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, 15–17 Tavistock Place, London WC1 H 9SH, UK. Tel +44 (0)207 927 2269; e-mail: virginia.berridge@lshtm.ac.uk

INTERVIEW SUMMARY BY VIRGINIA BERRIDGE

Robin Davidson's interest in addiction stemmed from his father, who was an evangelist in the dockside City Mission in Belfast, where Robin spent his childhood and early teens. He saw serious drinkers and gamblers 'saved'; some of whom would spend the rest of their abstinent lives working in the Mission. Robin's father said that Prochaska and DiClemente's transtheoretical model of change was really invented by St Paul in the Acts of the Apostles. Some of his father's contemporaries were members of the Oxford Group, whose members met in each other's homes, and which was strong in Northern Ireland in the 1940s.

He was attracted to study psychology because he was interested in what made people tick. He studied psychology and then clinical psychology at Leeds. He began to run relapse prevention groups for alcohol dependent people and was joined by Duncan Raistrick, a psychiatrist who came up from the Maudsley to develop services. They wanted to develop community services as well as inpatient services and were interested at the time in the idea of controlled drinking. They were both involved in producing a questionnaire, the Short Alcohol Dependence Data (SADD), which focussed on the psychological as well as physical components of dependence.

During his time at Leeds, Robin wrote a two-page critique of the Prochaska and DiClemente model of change, which came out at a pivotal time. His position now is that the model is a 'friendly grandfather' referred to when we want to know about matters from the olden days and sometimes,

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wisdom. There have been significant additions to the notion of motivation in addictive behaviours since then.

After his time in Leeds, Robin returned to Northern Ireland and continued to develop services, developing one of the largest clinical psychology services in Northern Ireland, while still keeping an interest in addiction. His early alignment with the alcohol dependence syndrome as a concept caused issues with his colleagues in clinical psychology, who thought he was going over to the medical model.

He became chair of the research committee of the Alcohol Education Research Council (AERC) in 2005. An editorial appeared in *Addiction* drawing attention to the fact that two industry representatives sat on the AERC Board, so researchers should not apply for AERC grants. He felt all sorts of safeguards had been built in and the industry people did not sit on the Research Committee. After this he became chair of AERC in 2010. During his time as chair, the organisation changed into Alcohol Research UK, which was an interesting learning experience. He was chair for six years and a further new organisation essentially brought together Alcohol Research UK with Alcohol Concern. As well as funding research, the new group, Alcohol Change UK, also had policy influence. He continues to think that there were sufficient safeguards built into research funding; conversations with the alcohol industry cannot just be eliminated.

He then became Chair of SMART Recovery UK (Self-Management and Recovery Training). This did not translate so well from the US to the UK market. This was a natural step for him because of his interest in mutual aid. The Prison Programme it runs is working well and has become more embedded. He is interested in the differences between SMART and AA and the type of people who attend these groups. Some respond to the spiritual dimension in AA.

Other psychologists at that time, like Jim Orford, Ray Hodgson, Nick Heather and Tim Stockwell influenced the field enormously. But addictions became less popular in the field of clinical psychology and the idea of appointing a consultant psychologist to an addictions service became the exception rather than the rule. Then, third sector organisations began to play a much greater role and the NHS agencies were reduced enormously. Neurodevelopmental disorders, mental health and child and adolescent psychology offered greater career progression. A silo mentality developed at the individual therapeutic level with different conditions treated by different people. The new generation of psychologists will bring comprehensiveness in clinical care in addiction. He himself would not change his choice of career. Clinical psychology has much to offer in terms of behavioural change.

**LINK TO FULL INTERVIEW, CONDUCTED BY DUNCAN RAISTRICK,
ON THE SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF ADDICTION WEBSITE:**

<https://www.addiction-ssa.org/knowledge-hub/topic/addiction-lives>

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Davidson, R. J., Raistrick, D. (1986). The Validity of the Short Alcohol Dependence Questionnaire (SADD). *British Journal of Addiction*, 82, 217-222.

The SADD questionnaire is still widely used, and I think has retained its popularity, because of ease of administration and construct validity i.e., it assesses pretty much all of the elements AUD. It also laid the foundations for the Leeds Dependence Questionnaire (LDQ.)

Davidson, R. J. (1992). Prochaska and DiClemente's model of change: a case study? Invited editorial. *British Journal of Addiction*, 87, 821-822.

This is I think the shortest paper I have written but the most pivotal in my view. As far as I am aware it was one of the first specific critiques in the international literature of the Transtheoretical Model of Change at a time when it was almost unchallenged.

Raistrick, D., Davidson, R. J. (1986). *Alcoholism and Drug Addiction*. Edinburgh, Churchill Livingstone.

I've included this book in the top3 as it was written by the interviewer, Duncan Raistrick and myself and was part of a long collaboration.

Accepted Article