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## Not ashamed but still too poor - Longitudinal changes in barriers to treatment entry for online treatment seekers

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**Aims:** To identify and recruit online treatment seekers and examine their treatment entry behavior and related barriers over a period of six months. A number of barriers to treatment entry have been previously identified for individuals either meeting criteria for substance use disorders (SUD) or actively seeking treatment. However, no longitudinal assessment of possible changes in such barriers has been published to date and no examination of such barriers has taken place specifically for those seeking treatment online.

**Methods:** Online treatment seekers were recruited through an online SUD treatment finder after completing online screening, followed by eligibility determination and an online informed consent. Participants were then emailed links to online assessments, delivered via Survey Monkey, to be completed within 24 hours of initial screening and again at one-week, one-month, and six-months following initial screening.

**Results:** Forty participants were recruited, presenting broad variability in gender (Female=60%), age ( $M=32$ ,  $SD=8.6$ ), and geography (10 states represented). The reported barriers to treatment entry at baseline replicated previous findings with stigma, shame, inability to share the problem, cost, and access, all presenting as significant barriers. Follow up assessments provided evidence of substantial shifts in barriers with stigma and shame becoming less prominent while cost and access increased in magnitude. Some differences based on gender, actual treatment-entry and past treatment experience were found.

**Conclusions:** Treatment-seeking individuals report changes in the reasons for not entering treatment as they progress through the treatment-seeking process. While stigma and shame are substantial barriers at initial seeking they become less important as the treatment-seeking experience continues. Research into the process, through which some barriers become less obstructive for treatment entry and the role that online treatment- and information-seeking plays in this process could help accelerate barriers removal and facilitate earlier SUD treatment entry.

### Biography

Adi Jaffe completed his PhD at The University of California in Los Angeles and postdoctoral studies from UCLA's Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior. He is the co-founder and executive director of research for Alternatives Addiction Treatment, a premier outpatient SUD treatment provider in Beverly Hills, California. He also founded and developed the first algorithm-driven SUD treatment-search tool that was used in the described study. He has published more than a dozen papers in reputed journals and serves on the editorial boards of a number of SUD journals.

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