

The Vitamin Cure for Alcoholism Orthomolecular Treatment of Addictions

by Abram Hoffer, PhD, MD, FRCP(C) and Andrew Saul, PhD

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The Vitamin Cure for Alcoholism explains how patients can stop craving alcohol and restore their health. Two credible authors wrote this enlightening book. By the time he passed away at age 91 ½, Abram Hoffer, PhD, MD, FRCP(C), had earned an international reputation for researching and developing orthomolecular psychiatry (as a complementary dimension of care), teaching other doctors and educating the public. Thousands of patients recovered. Co-author Andrew Saul, PhD, contributed his fascination with forgotten treatments and his capabilities as an author and an educator.

Before he became a physician and then a psychiatrist, Abram Hoffer obtained a PhD in biochemistry. Hoffer's advanced degree, research experience and observation skills proved useful during his medical studies. He learned to respect patients and above all, to do no harm. Starting in the 1950s and continuing for sixty years, Dr. Hoffer researched the chemical basis of psychiatry and developed treatments for schizophrenia, psychosis, anxiety, depression and alcoholism. Hoffer did the first double-blind placebo-controlled experiments in psychiatry, in the 1950s. He tested niacin and niacinamide (vitamin B3) for schizophrenia and discovered that optimum (large) doses of vitamins B3 and C can heal psychosis and restore normal brain function. Linus Pauling, PhD (Nobel-prize-winning chemist), read about Hoffer's vitamin therapy and found it so inspiring that, in 1968, Pauling invented a new word when he described Hoffer's practice of prescribing nutritional supplements as "orthomolecular" psychiatry.

When his patients had hallucinations, neurotransmitter imbalances, food sensitivities or addictions, Hoffer knew that episodes of mental illness can have a number of causes. He treated each patient according to the practice guidelines of psychiatry. Hoffer noted their mental status and took medical, mental and family histories, checked for infections and tested for medical problems (such as thyroid, adrenal, blood sugar and hormone disorders) before prescribing medications and complementing other treatments with vitamins, minerals and other nutritional supplements. Dr. Hoffer noticed that some patients tried to self-medicate with alcohol. Perhaps patients drank during episodes of schizophrenia or psychosis because they hoped to control their hallucinations, delusions and perceptual distortions. Abram Hoffer administered vitamin treatments when patients went psychotic, over-indulged drinking or took LSD. Over his long and distinguished career, Dr. Hoffer helped thousands of patients by fine-tuning their diets and prescribing regimens of nutritional supplements. He learned that vitamins, trace minerals, amino acids, antioxidants, energy and enzyme cofactors can normalize metabolism and stabilize brain chemistry. Orthomolecular treatments proved safe and effective. Many patients recovered and stopped drinking.

Orthomolecular regimens of vitamins complemented other treatments but contrasted with the standard methods. Most psychiatrists only offered talk therapy or treatments with drugs, talks or electric shocks. Why bother telling drunk, depressed, anxious or psychotic patients that their brains need optimum nutrition? Don't sick patients know that alcohol can deplete nutrients and interfere with brain function? Dr. Hoffer remained true to the principles of good medicine; he considered the root causes of symptoms before making a differential diagnosis and recommending treatments. He knew that certain nutrients are essential for health and wellbeing. Hoffer researched metabolic, biochemical and nutritional factors involved with mental illness. He identified alcohol as a liquid sugar, just by looking at its chemical formula. Hoffer believed that biochemical individuality and sugar cravings contribute to alcoholism especially if patients have low blood sugar or problems metabolizing alcohol. As a biochemist, Hoffer reasoned that niacin (vitamin B3) could restore mental health, even after repeated episodes of drinking. He researched vitamin therapy for decades, found it safe and effective and helped thousands of patients recover and live well.

Over many years, Abram Hoffer published his research in scientific and medical journals. Perplexed and disappointed by the American Psychiatry Association's refusal to accept his research, appreciate his discoveries or repeat his double-blind experiments with niacin, Dr. Hoffer decided to educate the public about vitamin therapy. Realizing that most physicians do not test for biochemical disorders, monitor nutrition or prescribe vitamins, Abram Hoffer wrote a series of books for patients, families and caregivers in which he introduced biochemistry, summarized research and shared scientific and medical information about orthomolecular medicine. Andrew Saul has also written books to remind readers about still-useful treatments developed decades ago. Whether readers are patients, families, caregivers or health professionals, Hoffer and Saul present their information clearly and succinctly. Abram Hoffer's books include: *The Chemical Basis of Clinical Psychiatry*, *Niacin Therapy in Psychiatry*, *How to Live with Schizophrenia*, *Nutrients to Age without Senility*, *Smart Nutrients*, *Healing Schizophrenia*, *Adventures in Psychiatry: The Scientific Memoirs of Dr. Abram Hoffer* and *Orthomolecular Medicine for Everyone*. Decades of editorials and articles in the *Journal of Orthomolecular Medicine* share Hoffer's views about schizophrenia, psychosis and alcoholism. (free archives at www.orthomed.org)

Hoffer and Saul credit Roger Williams, PhD, with researching vitamins in the 1940s, observing that lab rats vary in their tolerance for alcohol and experimenting with vitamins, recommending vitamins for alcoholism and developing the concept of biochemical individuality. (Reference: *Alcoholism – The Nutritional Approach* by R. Williams, PhD, 1959.) In 1968, Hoffer and Osmond wrote *New Hope for Alcoholics* to report their research and explain that their "ideal program for treating alcoholics" included "insightful experiences from which [patients] derived understanding about themselves and others." Hoffer and Osmond paid careful attention to 1. diagnosis, 2. etiology, 3. assessment of drinking behaviors, 4. treatment of medical and metabolic aspects, 5. hopeful prognosis, 6. suicide prevention, 7. hospital access, 8. competent caregivers and 9. review of patient, family and community rights and duties. They used niacin therapy to treat many alcoholics. *New Hope for Alcoholics* shared patient case reports, recovery stories and heartwarming testimonials written by several of the hundreds of alcoholic patients who recovered at Guest House, Michigan.

Updated a remarkable forty years later in 2009, *The Vitamin Cure for Alcoholism*, a concise 134 pages with references, presents (1) Abram Hoffer's decades of research, progress and success using optimum doses of niacin (with other vitamins, minerals and nutritional supplements) to heal patients with alcoholism and/or schizophrenia and (2) Andrew Saul's experiences learning about vitamin therapy and teaching forgotten treatments. Readers can learn that even though Abram Hoffer kept busy treating his patients and writing, he encouraged a worldwide network of doctors to consider restorative orthomolecular regimens. A number of physicians confirmed that optimum doses of vitamin B3 can heal alcoholic patients. For example, Dr. R. Smith in Detroit and Dr. D. Hawkins in New York used vitamin therapy to help hundreds of their patients recover from psychosis, depression, anxiety and alcoholism. Bill W., a co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, found niacin therapy so important to his own recovery that as a layman, Bill wrote two booklets to encourage members of AA to take vitamin B3. Hundreds recovered.

The Vitamin Cure for Alcoholism explains how to protect against and fight alcoholism using nutrition and vitamin supplementation. If you or someone you love has a problem with alcohol or another addiction, don't wait for your doctor to (1) discuss nutrition, (2) test for metabolic disorders, (3) consider your biochemical individuality or (4) suggest an orthomolecular regimen of vitamins and minerals. You owe it to yourselves to read this fascinating book and learn that restorative treatments for psychosis and alcoholism have been researched, developed and administered successfully to thousands of patients, *for more than fifty years!*

Review by Robert Sealey, BSc, CA author of *90-Day Plan for Finding Quality Care* www.searpubl.ca