**Introduction to the Psychology of Addictions**

**Blended Intensive Programme**

**“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University, Iași, Romania**

***Call for partners***

What is it about?

This Blended Intensive Program delves into understanding addiction, which is characterized by compulsive engagement in a behavior or substance despite harmful consequences. It explores psychological perspectives, emphasizing how individual traits, motivations, and mental processes contribute to addiction. Biological theories shed light on genetic predispositions, brain chemistry, and neurological changes that underlie addictive behaviors. Social and cultural theories highlight the influence of societal norms, environment, and social connections on addiction development. The impact of addiction on the brain is explained, illustrating how substances or behaviors alter neurotransmitter activity, affecting reward pathways and decision-making processes. Also, the genetic factors – which play a role in vulnerability to addiction, contributing to individual susceptibility – are explained and discussed.

Different forms of addiction, such as substance abuse, behavioral, and process addictions, are detailed. Substance abuse involves drugs or alcohol, while behavioral addictions relate to activities like gambling or gaming. Process addictions involve compulsive behaviors like eating or shopping. Assessment and diagnosis methods are also discussed, focusing on recognizing signs of addiction, using screening tools, and differentiating addiction from other mental health conditions. Also, the BIP focuses on treatment options that encompass a range of approaches, including psychotherapy, medication-assisted treatments, and holistic methods. The importance of personalized treatment plans tailored to individuals will also be highlighted. Further, recovery stages and strategies, like relapse prevention and building support systems, are explored, emphasizing the significance of ongoing support for sustained recovery. At the end of the program, we will underscore the importance of comprehending addiction's psychological aspects, emphasizing its impact on individuals and society, and advocating for proactive measures to address and prevent addiction-related issues.

Overall, the course provides a comprehensive understanding of addiction, from its origins and manifestations to assessment, treatment, and prevention strategies, emphasizing the multidimensional nature of addiction and the need for a holistic approach to address it.

Where?

"Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iasi, Romania

When?

**25-29.03.2024**

Who should attend?

This blended intensive program on addiction would be beneficial for various professionals, individuals, and groups interested in gaining a comprehensive understanding of addiction-related issues and enhancing their knowledge and skills in dealing with addiction. Potential attendees could include

1. **Graduate and Undergraduate Students**: Students pursuing degrees in psychology, neuroscience, social work, public health, medicine, law, sociology, or any field related to human behavior and health would benefit from this program. It could serve as supplementary learning, aiding their coursework, research, and understanding of addiction-related concepts.
2. Mental Health Professionals: Psychologists, counselors, therapists, and psychiatrists seeking to deepen their understanding of addiction, its psychological underpinnings, assessment methods, and evidence-based treatment approaches.
3. Healthcare Providers: Doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals interested in expanding their knowledge of addiction, its impact on health, and incorporating addiction treatment into their practice.
4. Social Workers and Counselors: Professionals working in social work, counseling, and related fields who engage with individuals or families affected by addiction and wish to enhance their ability to support them.
5. Addiction Specialists: Those already working in addiction treatment centers, rehabilitation facilities, or related settings looking to broaden their knowledge base, stay updated with current research, and explore innovative treatment strategies.
6. Law Enforcement and Legal Professionals: Police officers, lawyers, and court officials aiming to gain insights into addiction's societal impacts, legal aspects, and alternative approaches for handling addiction-related cases.
7. **Educators and Researchers**: Teachers, researchers, and academics interested in understanding addiction to develop educational programs, conduct research, and contribute to raising awareness about addiction-related issues.
8. Individuals Affected by Addiction: People personally impacted by addiction, including family members, friends, or those in recovery, seeking to deepen their understanding, gain insights into recovery strategies, and learn more about supporting themselves and others.
9. Policy Makers and Public Health Officials: Professionals involved in policymaking, public health, or community development interested in understanding addiction's societal implications and advocating for effective prevention and treatment strategies.

This blended intensive program offers a diverse range of perspectives and knowledge applicable across various fields, making it valuable for anyone seeking a deeper understanding of addiction and its multifaceted impact on individuals, communities, and society at large.

For **faculty members** looking to expand their expertise or gain a deeper understanding of addiction-related topics, this program could serve as a form of professional development, enhancing their knowledge base and potentially informing their future research or teaching. As addiction is a complex issue that involves multiple fields of study, this program could serve as a platform for interdisciplinary collaboration among academic professionals. It could encourage joint research projects, publications, and seminars focusing on addiction from diverse perspectives. **Professors, lecturers, and educators** specializing in psychology, counseling, social work, neuroscience, public health, and related fields can incorporate the knowledge gained from this program into their curriculum, offering students a broader and deeper understanding of addiction.

Learning outcomes

The learning outcomes of this BIP would encompass a comprehensive understanding of addiction-related concepts, theories, assessment techniques, treatment modalities, and societal implications. Participants will:

* Gain a deep understanding of addiction, including its definition, different forms (substance abuse, behavioral, process addictions), and the complex interplay of psychological, biological, and sociocultural factors contributing to addictive behaviors.
* Explore various theories of addiction, including psychological, biological, and social/cultural perspectives, understanding how each contributes to the development and maintenance of addictive behaviors.
* Understand how addiction affects the brain, neurotransmitter systems involved, and the role of genetics in predisposing individuals to addiction, providing a foundation in neurobiology and genetics as related to addictive behaviors.
* Learn to identify signs and symptoms of addiction, utilize screening and assessment tools effectively, and differentiate addiction from other mental health conditions through differential diagnosis techniques.
* Acquire knowledge of diverse treatment modalities, including psychotherapy, medication-assisted treatments, and holistic approaches, and understand their applications in addiction recovery.
* Explore stages of recovery, develop skills in relapse prevention strategies, and understand the importance of building support systems for individuals dealing with addiction.
* Recognize the societal impact of addiction, its implications on public health, and the importance of addressing addiction from both individual and community perspectives.
* Appreciate the multidimensional nature of addiction by integrating knowledge from various disciplines like psychology, neuroscience, sociology, public health, and more.
* Develop critical thinking skills to assess and address complex issues related to addiction, analyze different perspectives, and apply problem-solving approaches in clinical, research, or policy settings.
* Understand ethical responsibilities and challenges related to the treatment and research of addiction, recognizing cultural sensitivities and practicing in line with professional guidelines and standards.

Benefits

3 ECTS Credits

Course structure. Main topics

I. What defines addiction? Overview of the psychology behind addictions

II. Theories of Addiction

* Psychological theories of addiction
* Biological theories of addiction
* Social and cultural theories of addiction

III. The Brain and Addiction

* How addiction affects the brain
* Neurotransmitters and addiction
* The role of genetics in addiction

IV. Forms of Addiction

* Substance abuse and addiction
* Behavioral addictions
* Process addictions

V. Assessment and Diagnosis of Addiction

* Identifying signs of addiction
* Screening and assessment tools
* Differential diagnosis

VI. Treatment of Addiction

* Overview of addiction treatment
* Psychotherapy for addiction
* Medication-assisted treatment
* Holistic approaches to addiction treatment

VII. Recovery and Prevention

* Stages of recovery
* Relapse prevention
* Building a support system

VIII. Conclusion

* Importance of understanding the psychology behind addictions
* The impact of addiction on individuals and society