

Correlates of the Opioid Epidemic and Entrepreneurship: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

¹Raj Masih, ²Barbra Masih, ³Kaylin Arbaugh, ⁴Michael Philbrick, ⁵Hunter Pool, ⁶Cameron Masih, ⁷Himan Bhatia, ⁸Kshiraj Panchal, ⁹Alex Mongold, ¹⁰Christian Landis, ¹¹Sidney Cullers

¹MD, MPH, FRSPH, Potomac Highlands Mental Health Guild, West Virginia, United States

²MS, LPC, CRC, NCC Prevention Specialist, Department of Substance Use Prevention, Potomac Highlands Mental Health Guild, West Virginia, United States

³BS, Coordinator BUMPS Program, Department of Substance Use Counseling, Potomac Highlands Mental Health Guild, West Virginia, United States

⁴BS, Research Assistant, Department of Substance Use Prevention, Potomac Highlands Mental Health Guild, West Virginia, United States

⁵BS, Research Assistant, Department of Substance Use Prevention, Potomac Highlands Mental Health Guild, West Virginia, United States

⁶BA, Research Assistant, Potomac Highlands Mental Health Guild, West Virginia, United States

⁷MS, Engineering, Oracle Argus Data Scientist, Morgantown, West Virginia, United States

⁸BS, Research Assistant, Morgantown, West Virginia, United States

⁹BS, Information Technology Technician, Potomac Highlands Mental Health Guild, West Virginia, United States

¹⁰BS, Research Assistant, Department of Substance Use Prevention, Potomac Highlands Mental Health Guild, West Virginia, United States.

¹¹BS, Research Assistant, Department of Substance Use Prevention, Potomac Highlands Mental Health Guild, West Virginia, United States.

Abstract:

Entrepreneurially gifted individuals have been shown, under functional MRI studies, to have hyperactive neuronal circuits between the prefrontal cortex, limbic systems, and the reward center which are the same pathways activated in people with opioid use disorders (OUD). People with OUD obsess over procuring their drug and the rituals surrounding drug use. Entrepreneurs obsess over the creation and incubation of their innovative ideas and the stages of development. People with OUD have a compulsion to procure and use drugs often beyond their conscious control (Brook et al., 2010). People with entrepreneurial mindsets also exhibit similar compulsions to envision and create. By extension, therefore, people in recovery from OUD can utilize those same skills and characteristics to achieve entrepreneurial greatness with successful guidance and training. Therefore, the Opioid Epidemic and Entrepreneurship are a natural fit.

Key Words: Opioid Use Disorder, Entrepreneurship, ADHD, colleges

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I. Background:

The opioid epidemic and entrepreneurship are a natural fit. Not only can entrepreneurship be viewed as a solution to many aspects of the opioid epidemic, but these entities share common elements. A cursory review of the literature demonstrates insidious common elements shared by both the opioid epidemic and entrepreneurship (Baron, 1998; Volkow et al, 2012; Zulauf et al 2014; Antschel, 2017).

II. Objective:

Our objective was to determine the link between people with opioid use disorder and ADHD and successful entrepreneurs with ADHD.

III. Methods:

We conducted a scholarly literature review of English language articles with search terms: opioid use disorder, ADHD, entrepreneurship, and neuroentrepreneurship from 1990 through 2022.

IV. Discussion:

Shared common elements between Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) and entrepreneurship range from abnormal cortical brain activity, shared characteristics, to shared performance outcomes (Baron, 1998; Volkow et al, 2012; Zulauf et al, 2014). The pioneering work of Nora Volkow (2012) of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), has demonstrated that people with substance use disorder, particularly Opioid Use Disorder, have reduced dopamine sensitivity in the reward center of the brain, leading to an overwhelming desire to participate in activities that will increase the chance of dopamine release (risk taking, binge eating, drug use, and behavioral manifestations). Similarly, entrepreneurially gifted individuals have been shown under, functional MRI studies, to have hyperactive neuronal circuits between the prefrontal cortex, limbic systems, and the reward center (Baron, 1998) the same pathways activated in people with OUD (see Figures 1 and 2). People with OUD obsess over procuring their drug and the rituals surrounding drug use. Entrepreneurs obsess over the creation and incubation of their innovative ideas and the stages of development. People with OUD have a compulsion to procure and use drugs often beyond their conscious control (Brook et al, 2010). People with entrepreneurial mindsets also exhibit similar compulsions to envision and create. The lives of people with OUD are characterized by many failures. The lives of successful entrepreneurs are also characterized by failures. People with OUD are also capable of overcoming great adversity and failure to find overwhelming success. Similarly, people with entrepreneurial mindsets can overcome tremendous adversity and failure to achieve great success.

Figure 1:

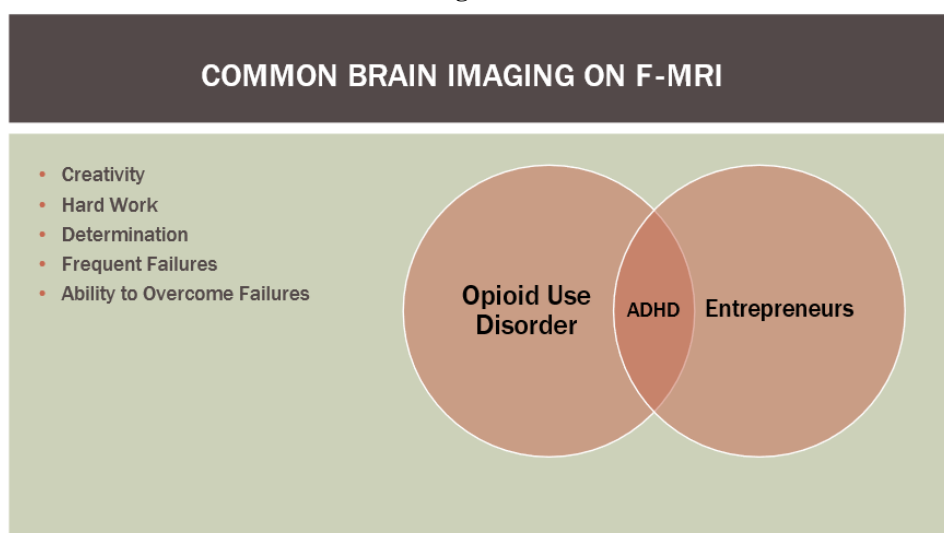
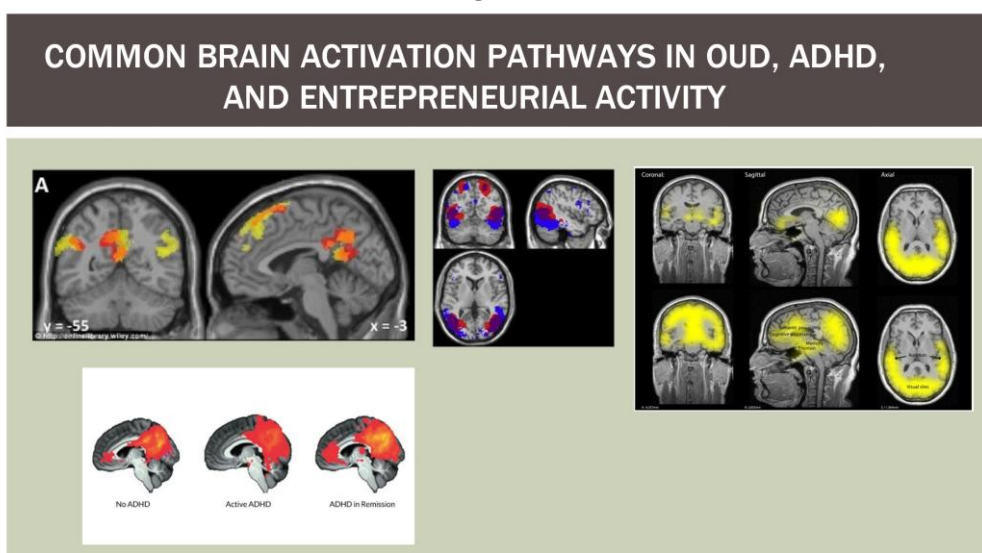


Figure 2:



A central theme common between people with OUD and entrepreneurship is the presence of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). A scholarly article by Thurik & Associates (2016) demonstrates a high prevalence of ADHD symptoms in successful business entrepreneurs. An elegant paper by Verheul & Associates (2015) described the validity of a prediction rule utilizing over 10,000 students that confirmed that students with a high level of ADHD symptoms were more likely to be successful entrepreneurs. A scholarly review by Brook & Brook (2010) demonstrated a high concordance between ADHD symptoms in childhood and the development of substance use disorders in adulthood, mostly to placate sensory overload, characteristic of ADHD. Similarly, a study by Zulauf & Associates (2014) demonstrated a strong relationship between ADHD, OUD, and successful recovery. The critical difference between the versions of ADHD shared by people with entrepreneurial mindsets and people with OUD is the ability to manage chaos. Successful entrepreneurs with ADHD develop internal coping mechanisms to manage the chaos, and people with OUD do not.

V. Conclusion:

In 2022 most people with OUD who are in recovery must conform to the imposition of societal and regulatory norms, “You are an addict, you have a felony, therefore, the best version of your life will be to stay sober and work in fast-food”. This is in direct contrast to the human potential that individuals with OUD possess, by virtue of shared ADHD circuits, with successful entrepreneurs. The potential for a flourishing life for people with OUD exists within the realm of entrepreneurship. There is a public perception that people with OUD are lazy, irresponsible, do not want to work, and want to stay high all of the time (Link & Phelan, 2001). The reality is people with OUD are extremely hard working. Being an addict is a full-time job. Hustling for drugs, getting money, traveling long distances, managing withdrawal, and dodging law-enforcement requires drive, motivation, hard work, perseverance, tenacity, and endless creativity. These are the exact characteristics that define successful entrepreneurship. By extension, therefore, people in recovery from OUD can utilize those same skills and characteristics to achieve entrepreneurial greatness with successful guidance and training. Therefore, the Opioid Epidemic and Entrepreneurship are a natural fit. Colleges that provide entrepreneurial training and incubators are poised to provide this guidance, training, and stewardship within communities devastated by the opioid epidemic.

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