The recovery spectrum: from self-change to seeking treatment.

Recent innovations in alcohol-focused interventions are aimed at closing the gap between population need and the currently uncommon use of alcohol treatment services. Guided by population data showing the heterogeneity of alcohol problems and the occurrence of natural remissions from problem drinking without treatment, alcohol services have begun to expand beyond clinical treatment to offer the untreated majority of individuals with alcohol-related problems accessible, less-intensive services that use the tools of public health practice. These services often are opportunistic, meaning they can be provided in primary-care or other unspecialized health care or community settings. They also can be delivered by nonspecialists, or can be used by people themselves to address problems with alcohol without entering the health care system. This developing spectrum of services includes screening and brief interventions, guided self-change programs, and telehealth options that often are targeted and tailored for high-risk groups (e.g., college drinkers). Other efforts aimed at reducing barriers to care and increasing motivation to seek help have utilized individual, organizational, and public health strategies. Together, these efforts have potential for helping the treatment field reach people who have realized that they have a drinking problem but have not yet experienced the severe negative consequences that may eventually drive them to seek treatment. Although the evidence supporting several innovations in alcohol services is preliminary, some approaches are well established, and collectively they form an emerging continuum of care for alcohol problems aimed at increasing service availability and improving overall impact on population health.