are “liquid handcuffs” worth “money in my pocket”?

a metaphor analysis of recovering substance abusers’ sensemaking of medicated-assisted treatment

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bottom line up front: how people communicate and conceptualize addiction treatment impacts their recovery
coming up

} background methods sample data implications
part I: background
nearly 10% of the U.S. population is dependent on drugs or alcohol

the societal costs of substance abuse exceed $510 billion annually according to SAMHSA
treating substance abuse is imperative for healthy communities
yet—treatment is complex
uptake of certain evidence-based practices remains low
e.g. medication-assisted treatment—methadone, buprenorphine
understanding the storied experience of addiction and treatment is vital
part II: research goals & methods
collaborative grant project among 14 Addiction Technology Transfer Centers, funded by SAMHSA
please note: This project was sponsored by a cooperative agreement #5UDITI013592 from SAMHSA. The opinions expressed herein are the views of the authors and do not reflect the official position of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), SAMHSA or Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT). No official support or endorsement of DHHS, SAMHSA, or CSAT for the opinions described in this document is intended or should be inferred.
To understand the cultural experience of MAT among four racial/ethnic groups.
8 focus groups \{ 5 cities across the U.S. \} 68 participants

participants: African American, Asian American, Hispanic/Latino, Native American
initial analysis: multi-step, iterative coding process
grounded discovery:
metaphors
secondary analysis: action implicative discourse analysis of live metaphors
part III: findings and data sample
using metaphors we trace the **turning points** of substance abuse treatment
agency: refers to ability to act and influence one’s life
when participants spoke of using drugs = active and agentic language
when talking about recovery = passive language, lack of control, decision-making
metaphors of drug and street culture

“scoring,” “chasing,” “hustling, “struggling”
metaphors of transition and motivation

“tired of chasing them blows,” getting “worn out,” getting off the “titanic,” “quick sand,” “angels,” “money in my pocket”
metaphors of recovery and MAT

“getting clean,” “going straight, “being detoxed,” MAT as “savior,” MAT as “crutch”
metaphors of maintaining recovery

avoiding “dope sickness” and “being detoxed,” wearing “armor,” feeling “bound,” “basics,” staying “still,” not “slipping”
a data example: wearing **liquid handcuffs**
part V: implications
so what?

{ agency
goal
setting
stories of hope}
agency: what can be done to restore it to recovery narratives?
goal setting: participants can usefully break recovery down into smaller finite steps
missing are stories of **hope:** we live our lives by the **stories** available to us
look for the article in an upcoming issue of Qualitative Health Research

questions?
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