

## **AIB 9050PROJ Project 2022 Term 1**

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### **Project Report of Nudging**

An investigation into how nudging can influence  
addiction treatment completion and length of stay

#### **Theme**

Marketing: Consumer Psychology

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*Recovery is possible and probable - with the right supports.*

*~ Jessica Cooksey, MA ICADC, New West Recovery*

## **Executive summary**

The following project report examines how to influence treatment completion and length of stay at Westminster House Society (WHS), a nationally recognized addiction treatment and recovery program in British Columbia (BC), Canada. The organization has provided addiction treatment as a health care solution for youth girls and adult women for 40 years.

Since 2015, British Columbians have experienced a health emergency due to increased fentanyl poisoned opioids that have fuelled an overdose crisis and killed over 9,000 individuals in six years. Despite the government interventions, the death rate has increased, peaking at 2,224 suspected overdose deaths in 2021. This report suggests that the crisis requires long-term bed-based treatment approaches to reduce the repercussions of post-treatment relapses.

The project report investigated how the organization can improve treatment outcomes with consumer psychology, social marketing, and nudging. The author identified that pre-treatment social marketing as nudges could change consumer perception while choosing a treatment program. Additionally, the report's research points to empowerment and patronizing nudging as an asset and resource during the treatment process to support individuals with their health care decisions that are often emotional and not rational. The main finding is that nudging is a solution to, directly and indirectly, influence behaviour and decision-making by prodding individuals to accept desired interventions without hindering freedom of choice. The nudging approaches identified are incentivizing goals, creating a familiar environment, utilizing the available social contagion, and tapping into tools of recap and feedback to increase completion rates and keep individuals in treatment longer.

It is recommended that the organization invest in nudging strategies to reduce the repercussions of post-treatment relapse. The recommended nudging strategies will help influence treatment choices, increase revenue by increasing LoS, improve treatment outcomes, reduce damage to the treatment industry's reputation, and reduce drug overdose and related deaths.

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## 1 Introduction

Westminster House Society (WHS) provides a nationally recognized healthcare solution of addiction treatment and recovery (treatment) for youth girls and adult women. The organization meets at the intersection of the private, non-profit, and public sectors; therefore, it falls into the fourth sector, 'For Benefit,' as it provides social value and commercial revenue (AIB 2021). WHS program recommends a minimum of 90 days of treatment as a starting point for sustainable recovery (WHS 2020).

The research project investigates how nudging can influence addiction treatment completion and length of stay (LoS) and recommends strategies to improve individual, organization, industry and societal outcomes. The research explores the value of the theory of consumer psychology, social marketing, and nudging. In addition, it analyzes the range of components within the WHS program using the 4P frameworks of behaviour change to determine how to change the behaviour of consumers by influencing them in treatment.

The problem the research seeks to resolve is the completion rates and LoS in the WHS addiction treatment program because, despite the 90 recommendations, the average length of stay in 2021 was 62.42 days (WHS 2020; WHS 2021b). Low completion rates and LoS are an issue because of the dangers of relapse in an opioid overdose crisis identified in 2015 and has claimed the lives of 9,041 individuals due to suspected drug overdose over six years (BC Coroners Service 2021). The crisis prompted advocacy groups to shift the drug policy paradigm to include decriminalization, a supply of safe drug substitutes, and calls for prescribed heroin to reduce the death rate (Jenkins et al., 2021; BCCSU 2019). Unfortunately, regardless of the interventions, the death rate has steadily increased.

Research into treatment for substance use disorder and addiction (SUD) suggests that adaptive, extended care models could improve long-term outcomes for individuals with SUD and reduce costs to society (McKay 2005). Therefore, it is important to research long-term approaches to reduce post-treatment relapses, ubiquitous in the addiction recovery industry despite treatment for SUD often requiring several rounds (McPherson 2019; MMHA 2021; Proctor & Hirshman 2014). Furthermore, it is suggested that individuals with risk-related behaviour are willing to pay third parties to help them make better decisions (Best 2019, Thaler & Sunstein 2009). Therefore, it is important to research this topic to develop a solution that supports decision-making while increasing LoS, improving outcomes, and delivering a recovery solution to those who need it (WHS 2020). Lastly, the repercussions of relapse are overarching. They include loss of life from a drug overdose, loss of revenue to the organization and damaging the reputation of the addiction recovery sector because of consumer judgement (WHS 2021b; Jansson-Boyd 2010; Ozdemir et al., 2017).

## **2 Review of theories and frameworks**

It is essential to understand the macro environment to plan a social marketing program. Therefore, a critical step is to identify the purpose of the program identified as how to change the perception of the LoS of treatment for individuals with addictions. The author examines relevant literature and theory related to consumer psychology, social marketing and nudging that can be exercised to increase completion rates and LoS at WHS.

### **2.1 Consumer psychology**

Consumer psychology is a scientific discipline that combines research methods, including psychology, marketing, and advertising (Jansson-Boyd 2010). Consumer psychology explains that human behaviour is linked to consumption. For example, a study on the psychological impact on consumption in World War I concluded that the government employed psychology successfully to encourage people to participate in war by manufacturing soap soldiers in the likeness of German soldiers (Jansson-Boyd 2010). Gambrill (2021) argues that consumer psychology can be linked to pharmaceutical companies that utilize public relations to change behaviours with psychological attacks aimed at medicalizing everyday concerns with inflated claims of seriousness appealing to consumer fear.

Epstine (2017), research of behaviour economics, concluded that consumer decisions are often emotional and not rational and can be linked to poor decision making, particularly in healthcare. Unfortunately, bad consumer decision-making affects the entire healthcare system and individuals needing care (Epstine 2017; Singh 2019). In comparison, WHS (2021b) concluded that the individual treatment stay was not long enough to successfully put the client's disease into remission, demonstrated by the reduction of successful outcomes because of a decline of LoS (WHS 2021b).

Thaler and Sunstein (2009) coined the term "libertarian paternalism" that pulls from behavioural psychology; it is described as a nonintrusive type of paternalism because choices are not blocked, fenced off, or significantly burdened. For example, in a nudging experiment, a potential non-smoker was asked to open a bank account and deposit her cigarette money into the bank account for six months. At the end of the experiment, if the individual could confirm she had not smoked during the six-month term, she was given her money back. However, failing the test, the money is donated to charity. This experiment is believed to have increased non-smoking successes by 53% (Thaler & Sunstein 2009).

### **2.2 Social marketing and nudging**

Social marketing is a subtle principle of behavioural economics (Chriss 2015). According to Dibb (2014), social marketing involves the application of marketing tools to solve health, social and other

problems by engaging in activities that will bring about positive social behaviour change. Social marketing differs from commercial marketing as the outcome aims to improve individual and societal well-being (Dibb 2014). The theory has two approaches, the patronizing approach that focuses on negative consequences and the empowerment approach that encourages freedom of choice (Zharekhina & Kubacki 2015). Research of social marketing messaging that aimed to decrease harm from the consumption of alcohol concluded that the patronizing approach that applied negative messaging, such as shame and guilt, influenced behaviour; because the appeal created a sense of discomfort that caused a reaction to reduce the negative feelings (Giachino et al. 2017; Zharekhina & Kubacki 2015). Giachino et al.'s (2017) study into an anti-speeding social marketing advertisement concluded that in creating a road safety campaign, fear appeals increased awareness and were reported as a successful communication tool solving the public health issues of speeding.

Nudging is a social marketing concept that proposes positive reinforcement and indirect suggestions to influence behaviour and decision-making by nudging consumers towards a preferred goal and targets individuals to adopt desired interventions such as human health and well-being (French 2011; Chriss 2015). Nudging can potentially guide individuals subtly towards what would be considered the correct selection of a predetermined service without mandating, forbidding options, or changing economic incentives (Singh 2019). Effective nudging campaigns include mass media non-smoking campaigns, and on the other side, include replacing sugary snacks with fruit at the checkout aisle to promote health in children (Marteau 2011). However, there is conflicting research that nudging is patronizing, for example, when a health authority positions itself as an expert and attempts to redirect people to conform to the desired behaviour. In this example, the focus of the nudge is to stimulate "positive choices by developing the conditions, social systems or environments in which people prefer to make choices for their benefit, and thus, it incites them to make a small effort to choose a socially desirable behaviour" (Zharekhina & Kubacki 2015, p. 4).

According to Walsh (2020), smell and emotion can benefit the environment. Scents nudge individuals to feel and behave in a certain way because the sense of smell affects the part of the brain that processes memories and emotions. Additionally, scents affect the psychology of an individual as it relates to confidence, mood, stress, and well-being (Zdraveski 2022). According to a case study by Gulas & Block (1995), ambient scents significantly impact an individual's reaction to a product and potentially influence consumption activity, as reported in a study that analyzed introducing a pleasant ambient scent in one section of a casino. Slot machine gambling activity in the scented environment increased significantly compared with non-scented sections in the same periods (Gulas & Block 1995).

## 2.3 Marketing Mix

Tapp and Spotswood (2013) argue that the traditional 4P's of marketing developed for commercial marketing is confusing in the social marketing arena. For example, the 4P Marketing Mix is a product, price, place, and promotion. It is not suitable for a social marketing campaign because the traditional 4P has little involvement or interaction with the consumers and does not consider the relationship approaches to social marketing (Tapp & Spotswood 2013). For example, consider breastfeeding campaigns and distracted driving scenarios – both campaigns aim to change perception but neither involve product or placement (Tapp & Spotswood 2013).

Chance et al. (2014) research provided a psychological explanation surrounding the difficulty of making healthy food choices and introduced a 4P Framework for behaviour change as a strategy for nudging individuals towards a desired healthier outcome. The Framework intended to categorize nudges into four categories. First, the Possibilities equated to the choices offered, such as quantities and assortment; the Process nudge consisted of how individual choices were influenced by accessibility. Third, the Persuasion nudge included timely messages with vivid adjectives and images. Lastly, the Person nudge category includes interventions such as help in making decisions and intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to create healthy habit behaviour (Chance et al., 2014).

Marketing mix provides practical frameworks by linking the key factors such as the choices of LoS, the availability of treatment and how to persuade a person to make a better choice using word of mouth and images (Chance et al. 2014). For example, the 4P Framework for behaviour change identifies how to nudge consumers to make better choices in treatment by acting consciously and considering other possibilities and processes presented. The nudges may seem insignificant; however, they can have profound effects when aggregated over time. Thus, the 4P Framework for behaviour change concludes that nudging could benefit health and change consumer behaviours (Chance et al., 2014).

According to WHS (2021a), LoS is determined in two ways, first, the predetermined length of stay purchased by the consumer based on public perception, and secondly, the influence of the client's length of stay on each other while in the treatment centre (WHS 2021a). By comparing the research of the discipline and literature of the theories and frameworks, the report concludes that consumer psychology, particularly social marketing and nudging, will change of perception of LoS. Therefore, the research project will contribute to the literature for the treatment industry by developing strategies to encourage LoS and persuade consumers to purchase more extended stay treatment programs using nudging. In addition, the project will prove that the power of persuasion through nudging will contribute to solutions to save lives in BC due to the opioid overdose crisis by persuading addicted people in treatment to complete treatment and increase LoS.

### **3 Research Methodology**

This section describes the research methodology and methods used to answer the research question. The study took a rigorous methodological literature review into the theory and frameworks of social marketing and nudging. As a result, it provided insight into the possibilities of changing the perspectives of consumer purchase of treatment and client perspective both internally and externally to improve treatment outcomes at WHS that will benefit revenue, reputation, and healthcare.

The digital research tool OneNote was utilized to organize all qualitative research into sections for further analysis. The research was conducted utilizing collective case studies to establish the usefulness of consumer psychology to explore how social marketing and nudging can influence consumer perception of treatment and then coded in OneNote by tagging relevant research for the study (Yin 2009). Case studies are a common research method used in psychology. The studies contributed to the knowledge of the report by offering the investigator the ability to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life situations.

Social marketing and nudging are relevant to the research topic because the data presented current and historical significance that the theories can change perception (Chriss 2015; Dibb 2014). The analysis followed the research approach by comparing WHS opportunities to the literature. The findings indicated that social marketing could change the perspective of LoS, like the importance of the anti-speeding campaign utilized to solve the public health issue of speeding that undermines social welfare (Giachino et al., 2017). Additionally, nudging has proven useful in subtly guiding individuals towards what would be considered a preferred selection of healthcare without restricting choice (Epstine 2017; Singh 2019). Finally, the research investigated real-life examples of consumer psychology to persuade consumer purchases (Yin 2009).

The secondary qualitative data collected for the research project included WHS Quarterly Board Reports (2021b0 and Policy and Procedure manual (2020) with access to the data negotiated with permission from the organization (Sanders et al. 2019). In addition, the consumer psychology data collected through industry peer-reviewed journal articles and textbooks provided through the Australian Institute of Business (AIB) library included examples that were relevant for the study to argue that the theory as applied could demonstrate change. For this purpose, the data was compiled and summarised, such as the example of social marketing and nudging in World War I and examples of Nudging from other case studies not presented in the results (Yin 2018; Sanders et al. 2019).

In the initial study, the theory of social marketing was researched and subsequently resulted in analyzing the nudging theory as it became relevant to the research project (Yin 2018). In addition, the initial study uncovered the framework of Chance et al.'s (2014) 4P Framework for behaviour change.



Therefore, the theory of social marketing and nudging in conjunction with the preferred instrument of analysis of the 4P Framework for behaviour change is the focus of project findings, implications, and project recommendations (Chance et al., 2014).

## **4 Discussion**

Research into treatment for substance use disorder and addiction (SUD) suggests that adaptive, extended care models could improve long-term outcomes for individuals with SUD and reduce costs to society (McKay 2005). However, BC's treatment and recovery industry consist of bed-based programs that vary in length of stay (MMHA 2022). Furthermore, there is no government regulation on treating substance use disorder or recommendation of the length of stay, regardless that length of stay has been considered a reliable predictor of post-treatment outcomes for a long time (Proctor & Hirschman 2014).

### **4.1 Analysis and findings of LoS and treatment completion**

Addiction treatment approaches include a variety of modalities in BC that are delivered in a bed-based environment or an outpatient approach. Bed-based treatment approaches are provided in government-funded (funded) treatment environments, privately funded institutions (private) and in a hybrid environment that hosts both funded and private beds (hybrid), such as WHS. Figure 1 defines the approaches to treatment and supportive recovery services in BC.

**Figure 1: Recovery services & treatment support**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Opioid Agonist Treatment (Harm Reduction)             | Treatment for opioid use disorder by delivery of opioid agonist treatment, opioid substitution medication (such as Suboxone or methadone) to manage opioid withdrawal.   |
| Outpatient Treatment Services                         | Substance use services and supports in an office or outpatient clinic setting may include one-on-one or group counselling, connection to medical treatment such as opioid agonist treatment, and help to access other community supports like housing and peer support groups.   |
| Bed-based Treatment such as WHS                       | Time-limited, intensive live-in treatment (typically 60-90 days) for individuals experiencing substance use-related challenges. Treatment includes group and one-on-one counselling, medical consultations, life skills training, family support programs, art, yoga, music, and narrative therapies.  |
| Stabilization and Transitional Services               | A temporary bed-based setting provides clinical support for individuals experiencing complex substance-use problems and unstable living conditions.  |
| Supportive Recovery Residences                        | Supportive recovery residences provide a safe, communal environment where individuals have the opportunity and the support to focus on their recovery journey and are suitable for people who may have completed a more intensive treatment program or require daily structure and support to prepare them for a more intensive treatment program. |
| Withdrawal Management – Facility or Residential Based | Short-term (up to 7 days) clinical support to individuals withdrawing from substances in different settings, including community, hospital, or home-based.   |
| Substance-Use Sobering and Assessment Beds            | Short-term support for less than 24 hours for individuals under the influence of substances to connect them to the services above.   |

Source: BC Government (2022)

In addition to the table above, there are approaches to managing addiction that include distributing a safe supply of drugs, needles, and paraphilia to drug addicts in environments such as safe consumption sites (BC 2022). Furthermore, a 14-day detoxification protocol and short stints in residential treatment for as little as 28 days have influenced consumers and gained popularity due to the insurance companies' preference to only provide funding for up to 30 days of bed-based treatment, which is rarely enough LoS (Giorgi 2021; McKay 2005). The use of long-term therapeutic communities (TC) suggests a treatment duration of 12-24 months will modify chronic destructive patterns of behaviour (Fals-Stewart & Schafer 1992). Best (2019) argues that recovery from addiction is not self-sustaining until around the five-year mark.

Milligan et al. (2010) suggest that completion of treatment and LoS are different; however, they are related and essential. Therefore, engaging individuals in treatment long enough to meet their completion goals is a significant component to prevent relapse because treatment completion has been linked to improved outcomes. Additionally, according to Fals-Stewart and Schafer (1992), an investigation into LoS produced results that introducing education and lectures too early is counterproductive in treatment because this phase of treatment relies on those capacities of individuals that are impacted by drug addiction. Finally, a study by McKay (2005) concluded that the quality of life of individuals affected by substance use disorder (SUD) could improve with an extension of continued care post addiction treatment. Controlled studies of 25 years compared longer planned treatment versus shorter-term treatment concluded that the treatment outcomes did not vary; however, the definition of long-term treatment rarely exceeded 90 days (McKay 2005). In contrast, follow-up studies of TC reported a significant reduction in drug use amongst ex-residents who stayed long-term (Fals-Stewart & Schafer 1992).

### **Reflection:**

The research findings indicate that long-term programs are better for addiction treatment to prevent re-admission due to the relationship between LoS, cognitive impairment and the treatment process (Fals-Stewart & Schafer 1992). According to Sutton (2021), treatment requires an adequate amount of time for individuals to form a therapeutic alliance with their addiction counsellor. Additionally, introducing lectures too early is counterproductive because of the capabilities of those impacted by drug addiction. Therefore, LoS is a reliable predictor of post-treatment outcomes (Fals-Stewart and Schafer 1992; Proctor & Hirschman 2014). Furthermore, studies implied that those who have experienced longer LoS benefit from the treatment process due to better cognitive competencies that lead to completion of treatment goals (Milligan et al., 2010; Fals-Stewart & Schafer 1992). In addition, the findings indicate that experience in long-term treatment identified treatment engagement as a

predictor of positive outcomes because longer-term treatment provided an opportunity for individuals to progress over time (Dillon et al., 2020).

## **4.2 Analyzing effective social marketing and nudging**

The problem of addiction has become large and complex and is therefore defined as a “wicked problem” because of the opioid overdose crisis affecting the lives of citizens of BC (Basil 2019; MMHA 2021). Attacking the problem with a downstream social marketing approach can potentially change individual-level perceptions of treatment LoS. Thaler and Sunstein's (2009) nudging theory can help change the influences that affect the behaviour. Reflecting on social influence includes the heuristics that create a misperception, individual optimism and overconfidence risk life and health, and overcoming the desire to stick with what is familiar (Thaler & Sunstein 2009). These behaviours are pertinent influences in treatment that affect behaviour and can benefit from a nudge in the right direction (Thaler & Sunstein 2009).

The author researched the factor for LoS and analyzed how social marketing could improve the average length of stay from 62.42 to a minimum of 90 days (WHS 2020; WHS 2021b). The research pointed to nudging as a tool to change consumers' perception of treatment. Figure 2 is the 4P behaviour change framework that illustrates the analysis of nudging for an individual's treatment process and how the 4P works throughout a treatment process to help individuals complete. The first step identified the possibilities of services available at how they are accessible. In the second step, the author analyzed how to persuade individuals by framing and influencing the consumers. The third step is the treatment process that suggests precommitments and nudges from others. The final step is to motivate the individual with nudges to keep their intentions reinforced and encourage them to complete treatment and subsequently increase LoS.

**Figure 2: 4P Nudging framework for behaviour change**

| Possibilities (mapping the choices)         | Process (how choices are made)        |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| MAKE IT AVAILABLE                           | MAKE IT EASY                          |
| 90 days + treatment                         | Help from others                      |
| Break down overconfidence                   | Precommitments                        |
| Change in perceived social norms            | Storytelling                          |
| Reduce barriers & Reduce relapse            | Familiarity (appealing to the senses) |
| Target the exchange                         | Social contagion                      |
| Persuasion (framing the choices)            | Person (reinforcement)                |
| MAKE IT ATTRACTIVE                          | MAKE IT MOTIVATING                    |
| Influencing personal choice                 | Setting goals                         |
| Word of mouth from opinion leaders          | Slowing down the process              |
| Make it visually attractive and comfortable | Incentivising                         |
| Deliver the right message at the right time | Reducing overconfidence               |
| Letting go of social norms                  | Providing feedback and recapping      |

Source: Developed for this report (Chance et al. 2014)

### **Reflection**

The heuristics that create a misperception are the social norms that align with the stigma associated with addiction. According to Thaler and Sunstein (2009), misperception of risk can distort judgement. For example, easily remembered problems inflate judgements, and if no events come to mind, the judgment might be distorted downward (Thaler & Sunstein 2009). Take into consideration an overdose event. Those who have had an overdose event can be nudged easily toward the desired outcome of treatment completion versus those who have not experienced such an event. Therefore, the stigma can potentially affect the completion rates and subsequent LoS for those who have not had an overdose event. An example of nudging to reduce the stigma is the WHS anti-stigma campaign “Not all Addiction Looks Like This” (WHS 2021c). This campaign aimed at removing the stigma that separated individuals with SUD, such as the pill-popping grandmother and the young intravenous drug user. Both have the behaviour of addiction and need help; it is the stigma that is the misperception that they consider each other as different (Hogarth unpub).

Reflecting on social norms is associated with a misperception of LoS created by shorter-term programs and the framing effect of decision making because of how information is presented, not on the information itself. For example, programs that market themselves as a short-term treatment program

for approximately one month frame the program as luxurious and promote that its luxury helps clients enjoy a more intensive treatment regimen (Evolutions Treatment Center 2022). However, circling back to Fals-Stewart and Schafer (1992), results indicate that introducing intensive treatment too early is counterproductive in treatment because individuals' cognitive capabilities are impacted by drug addiction. Therefore, individuals with shorter LoS in treatment are at risk of poor outcomes, including re-admissions (Fals-Stewart and Schafer 1992). Therefore, framing LoS treatment drawing attention to the rate of relapse of short-term programs is a beneficial patronizing approach to nudge pre-treatment (Thaler & Sunstein 2009).

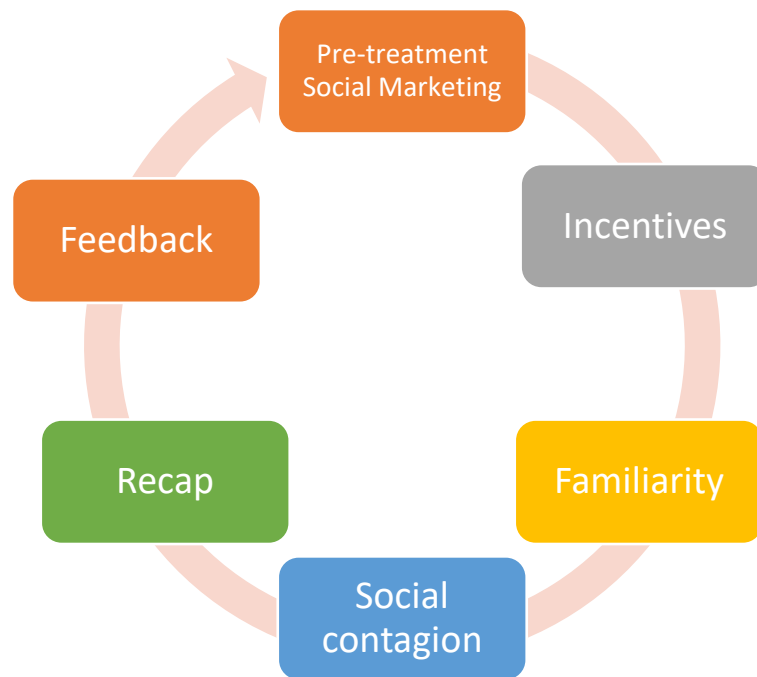
Individual optimism and overconfidence explain individual risks taking, particularly in risk to life and health. Nevertheless, individuals are generally optimistic when stakes are high, such as the life of those in treatment (Thaler & Sunstein 2009). According to WHS (2021b), early and unplanned discharges are common to individuals rewarded early in treatment with physical, family and community recovery capital that result in risks of relapse, re-admission, and fatalities from overdose due to overconfidence in their recovery. They often overestimate their immunity from harm and fail to take sensible preventative steps; they have forgotten why they came to treatment in the first place (Thaler & Sunstein 2009; WHS 2021b). A patronizing nudge can serve as a reminder of past choices, reminding individuals of the consequences of their choices utilizing introspective writing in treatment (WHS 2020).

Overcoming the desire to stick with what is familiar can correlate to individuals wanting to leave treatment and return home to their family's loved ones, return to work, and remove them from the uncomfortable feelings of change. Using storytelling as a form of nudging can persuade people to display the "desired behaviour" (Gerard 2022). For example, nudging with stories of leaving treatment too early will help individuals identify with others by creating identifiable bullet points.

## **5 Recommendation**

Addiction is a cunning, baffling and powerful disease that cannot be overcome easily (Best 2019). When considering the DSM-5 allocation of addiction as a disease, it is perplexing that individuals are not provided with treatment options that include LoS (WHS2020). The findings indicate that throughout the journey to recover, pre-treatment, and during the stay in treatment, a series of empowerment and patronizing nudge approaches can help increase LoS and treatment completion. Figure 3 is a circle of nudging developed to identify the stages and linkage of nudging in treatment.

**Figure 3: The LoS circle of nudging**

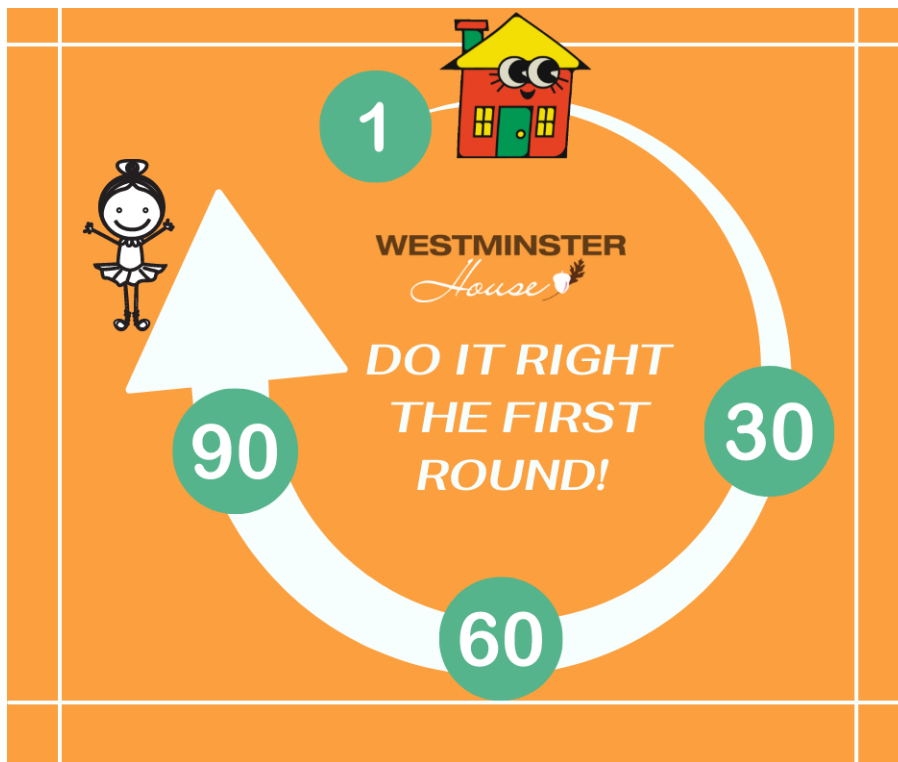


Source: Developed for this report (Thaler & Sunstein 2002)

### **5.1 Pre-treatment Framing**

The marketing program phase will include a pre-treatment social marketing campaign framing the possibilities of longer-term treatment, setting the stage before treatment. The positioning concept targets generation X, Y and millennials who are middle class, upper-middle-class, working-class and individuals with insurance (Hogarth unpub2). In addition, the target is individuals who are drug and alcohol users, including closet drug addicts, binge drinkers, excessive party girls, and function alcoholics living in Western Canada (Hogarth unpub2). The pre-treatment communication statements aim to draw attention to the positive aspect of long-term treatment (Thaler & Sunstein 2009; Weinreich 2006). Potentially, the images will be created to appeal to the reflective system that is more deliberate and thoughtful (Thaler & Sunstein 2009). Figure 4 is a sample of a social media marketing slogan, “Do it right the first round!” is an empowerment approach that encourages freedom of choice that aims to nudge individuals toward longer-term programs choices.

**Figure 4: Sample social marketing image**



Source: Developed for this report (2022)

Another nudging technique that can be utilized is anchoring and adjusting. According to the anchoring theory, a campaign can start with an anchoring point of 120 days for treatment, with the ability to adjust direction up or down (Thaler & Sunstein 2009). An example marketing slogan for an anchoring campaign is “120 days to recovery”. The drawback is that advertising an anchor in a social marketing campaign could potentially deter individuals for the program who are looking at a short treatment, thereby losing the opportunity to nudge in treatment.

## **5.2 Treatment nudging**

Choice architecture is the different ways that choices can be presented to consumers that improve an individual’s ability to select options that will help nudge them in treatment (Thaler & Sunstein 2009). The findings indicate that framing the stages for treatment in impactful ways can help increase LoS. For example, measuring treatment completion by stages (goals) versus length of time in treatment can be orchestrated by a choice architect and include incentives to nudge people to move towards their goals. According to Baily (2017), setting appropriate mastery goals that are appropriately challenging and motivating will aid in health behaviour change. Empowering individuals with incentives like goal setting and rewarding individuals when they meet their goals can potentially



increase LoS without removing an individual right to choose and potentially solve many problems in society (Thaler & Sunstein 2009).

A fundamental and straightforward way WHS treatment program can adopt nudging consumers is with scent using cooking and baking and creating a comfortable home-like environment (Walsh 2020). In addition, the nudge can help the consumers improve feelings and behaviour while in treatment, triggering positive emotions, improving confidence, and reducing stress (Zdraveski 2022).

Recovery can be a contagious concept that spreads through osmosis (Keane et al., 2014; Morris 2020). Consider social contagion as a nudge in addiction treatment; for example, according to Best (2019), recovery happens in and is supported by a community, such as WHS. Active players within the treatment community develop a sense of collectivism and solidarity that installs hope and possibility in newcomers to the program (Best 2019). Role models play a character in teaching individuals how to live recovery and naturally conform to the group's social norms (Best 2019). In addition, opportunities for social learning by observing and imitating the recovery behaviours of their peers in recovery promotes the development of coping skills, and "behavioural economics in which positive attitudes, beliefs and expectations that support sustained recovery come to dominate the individual's value system" (Best 2019 p. 4).

Furthermore, nudging with storytelling is a meaningful way to trigger a positive treatment outcome. According to Lederman (2015), the ability of a recovering addict to talk about their addiction and recovery plays a fundamental role in addiction treatment groups led by counsellors. Storytelling is a way to connect with people and inspire others struggling with behavioural health conditions. Additionally, stories can demonstrate that treatment works, and recovery is possible and act as a reminder of previous circumstances that led individuals to accept treatment (Lederman 2015, McCall et al. 2019).

The study implies that client feedback nudges from their support network and counsellors are both patronizing and empowering approaches to nudging and can improve outcomes. Additionally, the findings indicate that nudges for good behaviour and incentivizing those who had a good recovery week could theoretically aid in treatment completion. In contrast, when feedback does not work, a nudge might, for example, remind an individual of where they came from and why they accessed treatment in the first place is a solid nudge for those demonstrating a decline in recovery during treatment (Thaler & Sunstein 2009). In addition, introspective writing assignments such as reflection of the days leading up to treatment could be considered a useful nudging recap tool (WHS 2020).

## **6 Conclusion**

The report investigated consumer psychology, social marketing, and nudging and analyzed the WHS program utilizing the 4P behaviour change framework. In addition, case studies were utilized to provide insight and investigation into the theory of social marketing and nudging implementation at WHS. The report concludes that the organization can improve outcomes by developing a series of patronizing and empowering nudges throughout the treatment process. It is recommended that the organization invest in nudging strategies that will influence the choice of treatment, increase revenue by increasing LoS, improve treatment outcomes, improve the reputation of the bed-based treatment industry, and reduce drug poisoning and deaths related to the use of substances. The main nudges identified are pre-treatment framing and nudges identified during the treatment process are to offer incentives for goals reached, provide a familiar environment, utilize the social contagion and storytelling, and use recap and feedback to keep individuals in treatment.

The author cautions the reader of the limitation to the investigation of how nudging can influence addiction treatment completion and length of stay. The research methodology utilized a multiple-case state format to present results; however, not all the case studies were presented due to word count constraints. Additionally, the investigation of peer-reviewed data sources for relevant tools and frameworks for social marketing and nudging analysis discovered that limited tools were available. Finally, the project was limited to the secondary data available in the public libraries, WHS public documents and the internet and time constraints to complete the project.

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