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Letter to the Editor

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Announcement of The Elle Foundation's 2025 Awards

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Letter to the Editor

Is Reward Deficiency Syndrome (RDS) (Addiction) patient hope for successful treatment and recovery dependent upon how quickly traditional treatment practitioners become educated in genomic interventions? RDS continuing education credits are imperative for improved standards of care.

The Elle foundation, incorporated in 1995, in Dallas, Texas had an original mission statement for stopping the generational cycle of addiction. Prevention for the next generation is still our primary goal; however, we are also focused on family genomics, helping addicts with mental health disorder comorbidity receive genomic interventions for RDS. In the year 2000, the Elle foundation created the "Award of Excellence," to recognize novel contributions and innovations which are changing the addiction recovery industry, enlarging addiction perspective beyond the limitations of existing models and raising the bar above the level of the 1950's Minnesota model.

The first award of excellence was presented to Dr. Deborah C. Mash, neuroscientist, professor of neurology, chairman of the brain endowment bank at Miller School of Medicine, University of Miami, at her St Kitts Healing Visions research facility, for novel contribution through discovery of both the coca-ethylene molecule and the noribogaine metabolite, and advancement in opioid detoxification research using ibogaine. Over the decades, we have spotlighted the work of scientists, doctors, treatment centers, individual and institutional entities to showcase resources and inspire hope for those still suffering.

In the early 2010's we began contributing research review analysis of peer reviewed addiction studies and began following the works of progressive scientists who were inventing translational medicine to address underlying neurogenetic and neurobiological causal influences. We wish to raise awareness of new innovations from the world of science in the genomic era of addiction medicine, to offer hope to transgenerational families who have not found remedy in traditional treatment.

Science has many superstars, pioneers and trail blazers. Dr. Mark Gold outshines even the best. He is a trail blazer, a pioneer in addiction research. His research on the brain reward pathways is revolutionary, in that he was able to identify how drugs like cocaine, opioids and nicotine literally highjack the brain's reward circuits. He contributed great understanding of the role of dopamine and norepinephrine in addiction.

He discovered cocaine's mechanisms of action, how it effects the pleasure pathways and dopamine's role in intensifying cocaine's effects. This understanding helped open doors for improved treatment protocols, and strategies to treat cocaine addiction. Likewise, he contributed innovative treatments for opioid use disorder, using both opioid agonists and antagonists. His research has informed of better approaches to quelle the opioid epidemic. Dr. Gold applied the brain-disease model of addiction to nicotine use disorder and smoking. This model looks at smoking as more than a bad habit, but as an addiction driven by changes in the

brain neurochemistry. His work led to new treatment such as nicotine replacement therapies.

Dr. Gold's work has informed clinical practice, government policy and helped re-educate the public as to the neurogenetic and neurobiological nature of addiction, as a neurobiological brain disease. He has inspired improved care and reduced stigma. He has helped ease the shame of patients who were judged as having moral failing, lack of willpower, personality disorder and/or behavioral issues. He has been an advocate for access to early intervention, focusing on the neurobiological underpinnings and evidence-based treatment to induce dopamine homeostasis. He has trail blazed genomic interventions, created new practitioner training programs, with accreditation for standards of care.

Dr. Gold's literary and research contributions are extensive. He has authored hundreds of research papers, articles, books and as editor of Psychology Today, he contributes informed blogs to help the public and the practitioner. As a professor he has mentored generations of students, researchers, and clinicians. This list includes inspiring Dr. Nora Volkow, who currently serves as director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, to evaluate the dopamine hypothesis when she was a resident of psychiatry at NYU.

Many in the layperson/practitioner world of traditional treatment remain uniformed of the enormity of change in perspective which has come from the completion of the human genome project, and gene-wide association studies. New translational models have been created. Genetic and epigenetic biomarkers have been discovered. New understanding supports Dr. Gold's assertion that dopamine depletion, and neurobiological syndromes, such as RDS, effecting the brain reward system, are the true issues which need neuroscientific intervention.

Early in his career he discovered that cocaine withdrawal is not solely psychological, but that it has physiological aspects, epigenetic alterations affecting dopamine availability on molecular and cellular levels. The 1985 article titled "New Concepts in Cocaine Addiction: The Dopamine Depletion Hypothesis", and his many follow up articles, reveal that cocaine withdrawal is complicated needing medical assistance.

How is it that this research evidence has not led to a change or update of admittance criteria for detoxification facilities? Recently, a woman from West Palm Beach, died within a matter of hours after being denied admittance to a detox facility. The administrative criteria for detox admittance is not up to date current genomic perspective, nor in alignment with new scientific evidence. In fact, in this case it appears to be 40 years behind science.

It is said that it takes one hundred years for scientific advancements to trickle down to public knowledge. We need to speed that up, update twelve step treatment protocols with neuroscientific interventions. Those working on the front line must operate within the guidelines and limitations of their corporate administrative bodies. How do we speed the delivery of novel genomic treatment applications to the front line, to the forefront where therapists treat patients? Continuing education credits is one way.

Another brilliant superstar of the research world in the field of neuroscience is Dr. Panayotis Thanos, a professor who has contributed enlarged perspective of behavioral neuropharmacology, and neuroimaging of dopaminergic pathways. He is a senior research scientist, and director of the behavior neuropharmacology and neuroimaging laboratory on addiction at the clinical research institute at Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, at the University at Buffalo.

In addition to his extensive research, including almost 250 peer reviewed publications, he is literally teaching the next generation of neuroscientists and doctors of neuropharmacology. His neuroimaging contributions have been extremely helpful in providing visual testimony to dopamine neurotransmission as well as mapping the brains functional connectivity in response to drugs of abuse, genetics and environment. He has mentored hundreds of students and young scientists, many of which are today practicing physicians and faculty in academia. Eventually these contributions in academia, and clinical practice. The entire practitioner world educated in the traditional treatment era needs to be educated in the RDS paradigm and psychiatric and/or psychological genomics.

Dr. Thanos's focus on understanding the genetic and psychosocial risk factors, including environment are critical in helping better understand and serve patients. Dr. Thanos's molecular psychiatry research has also helped provide data to support the concept of RDS and how this can be used as an adjunct to traditional approaches. Specifically, Dr. Panayotis Thanos's contributions have led to new neuroscientific applications for patients with RDS manifesting as addictive endotypes. His work in association with other global scientists has increased awareness of the real phenotype RDS, bringing attention to the fact that traditional treatment addresses symptomatic addictive behaviors, rather than biobehavioral causal influences.

Most recently, Dr. Thanos's lab has published research on the utilization of exercise precision dosing as an additional adjunct tool in attenuating and preventing substance use disorder and is considered one of the leaders in exercise neuroscience and addiction. Finally, Dr. Thanos's lab is presently studying the behavioral, neurochemical and brain connectivity consequence of prenatal nicotine and cannabis exposure on the offspring. The goal is to provide a greater insight into the impact of this prenatal exposure on the risk for psychiatric disorders.

The Elle foundation celebrates 30 years of service on January 14, 2025. The Elle foundation research institute's 100 series of family genomics continue, and the 200 series is set to begin in 2025. We have a voice, and a platform, and we wish to shine a media spotlight on these two incredible scientists who are changing the recovery landscape. We wish to say thank you on behalf of ourselves, those still suffering, those who died in their disease, and on behalf of the recovering world. Today the Elle foundation announces 2025 awards, honoring Dr. Mark Gold with a life-time achievement award in neuroscience and Dr. Panayotis Thanos with a 2025 award for excellence in behavioral neuropharmacology and neuroimaging. Thank you for your excellence and your service.