

Psychoneuroimmunology - When Stress, Trauma and Addiction Intersect

Kevin McCauley

Wednesday, November 8th, 8:00am-9:15am

Dr. Kevin McCauley is a Senior Fellow at Meadows Behavioral Healthcare. He graduated in 1992 from Drexel University School of Medicine and first became interested in the treatment of substance use disorders while serving as a Naval Flight Surgeon.

Kevin wrote and directed two films: "Memo to Self" about the concepts of recovery management, and "Pleasure Unwoven" about the neuroscience of addiction which on the 2010 Michael Q. Ford Award for Journalism from the National Association of Addiction Treatment Providers.

Kevin lives with his wife, Kristine, in Sedona, Arizona and recently completed a Master's in Public Health at the University of Arizona.

Session Description:

Chronic stress, trauma, and addiction are intimately associated with chronic disease, post-traumatic stress disorder, and relapse to drug use. But how? What are the mechanisms through which stress, trauma, and drug use damage the brain? The answer is: the immune system. The immune system has been called a sensory organ of stress for the brain, and a key reason chronic stress, trauma, and addiction are harmful is because they are *inflammatory*. For those of us in recovery from addiction or trauma, it is important to understand how chronic stress, unresolved trauma, and continued intoxication trigger inflammatory processes in the brain, but that strengthening our immune system improves recovery and resilience to relapse. This lecture will discuss research into *psychoneuroimmunology* - the study of how the environment, the brain, and the immune system interact to create vulnerability or resilience to mental illness.

At the end of this course participants should be able to:

- Define Psychoneuroimmunology and describe the connection between the immune system and stress, trauma, and addiction.
- Define Social Determinants of Health and describe how they affect stress and vulnerability to mental illness.
- Explain how the practices and habits of Recovery Management decrease inflammation and improve resilience to stress and relapse.

