Abstract

The universal, selective and indicated forms of prevention classification scheme has been recommended and largely adopted as an improvement on previous notions of primary and secondary prevention. However, there is no consensus or clarity about the placing of environmental, community-based or mass media preventive interventions within this scheme. It is suggested that a new dimension of functional types of prevention, namely environmental, developmental and informational prevention should be specified alongside the forms of prevention in a taxonomy matrix, and that this is an improvement on the current one-dimensional universal, selective and indicated scheme. Moreover, it is argued that a reappraisal of mainstream prevention theories leads to a prediction of the relative effectiveness of these functional types of prevention. This prediction specifies that environmental prevention is generally more effective than developmental prevention which, in turn, is generally more effective than informational prevention.

Keywords
Prevention, theory, taxonomy.