**Addict: are you born or made?**

By Eliana Russ

Addiction is a chronic disease that consists of psychological or physiological dependence on the use of a substance or the performance of an activity. In society, there is a mistaken belief that becoming addicted is a choice, the consequence of a reckless lifestyle. However, current scientific research indicates that genetic makeup has a great influence on the development of addictions. In fact, the scientific community is optimistic that furthering this line of study could be essential for improving treatment and prevention of this disease. So, to the question "addict, are you born or made?", the answer is a combination of genetic and environmental factors, which makes some people more vulnerable than others.

Epigenetics suggests that people's environment and lifestyle can modify the structure of their DNA. Studies have indicated that environmental factors trigger biochemical processes that alter the structure of DNA throughout people's lives. Eventually, these epigenetic marks can be passed from parent to child, affecting gene expression. For example, Díaz and Abalo (2019) state that psychological factors such as stress and depression can alter the genes linked to the brain reward system, making people more prone to developing an addiction.

On the other hand, it is known that drug addiction is a consequence of their genes and the environment where a person develops. As stated by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA, 2019), the interaction between genetic factors and an individual's life circumstances is a key element in being more vulnerable to drug abuse. NIDA also explains that, for example, adolescents who have access to physical activities after school hours show less interest in using drugs.

In short, addiction is a highly nuanced disease with complex causes. In addition to the obvious psychological and social component, genetics also plays an important role in the development of this disease. Although genetic predisposition alone is not enough to lead a person to addiction, when combined with negative environmental factors, the risk of developing an addiction is increased.