ADHD and drug abuse

Catarina Freitas¹, Tânia Abreu¹, Rita Figueiredo², and Sandra Queirós¹


Abstract

Introduction: Several studies have shown a high prevalence of comorbidity between attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and drug abuse in adolescence and in adulthood. It is argued if ADHD is, in itself, a risk factor for drug abuse or if both are interconnected by conduct disorder, very common in individuals with ADHD.

Objectives and Methods: The authors proposed to conduct a literature review on the subject, trying to establish mechanisms, prevalence, onset and consumption patterns and associated factors.

Results: The prevalence of ADHD patients who abuse alcohol or illicit drug is estimated to be between 9 to 40%. Patients with ADHD appear to abuse earlier of alcohol and illicit drugs, with much more pronounced frequency and rate dependence. Approximately one third of patients with ADHD and substance use disorder abuse of the prescribed psychostimulant medication. However, there are disparate results regarding the influence of the pharmacological treatment of ADHD in risk of development drug addiction.

Discussion and Conclusions: Some theories relate the development of some symptoms with factors affecting cognitive processes that can also be associated with drug abuse. ADHD and substance abuse and dependence have similarities in terms of neurotransmission systems and anatomical structures, for example, the mesolimbic dopamine system.

Supplementary material: Complete presentation available at http://ijcnmh.arc-publishing.org