Sensation Seeking and Cocaine Dependence in Adults With Reported Childhood ADHD

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Objective: To compare measures of sensation seeking in a clinical group of cocaine-dependent (CD) patients with and without a history of probable childhood ADHD and in non-cocaine-dependent (NCD) healthy volunteers.

Method: Patients (n = 75; 42 with and 33 without probable childhood ADHD) and comparisons (n = 84) were assessed with the Diagnostic Interview for Genetic Studies, the Wender Utah Rating Scale for childhood ADHD, and the Zuckerman Seeking Sensation Scale.

Results: We found significantly higher prevalence rates of probable childhood ADHD in CD versus NCD (p < .001). The mean total scores of sensation seeking were significantly higher in CD versus NCD participants (p < .001) as well as in CD patients with versus those without a probable history of childhood ADHD (p < .001).

Conclusion: Our study sets the basis for longitudinal investigation assessing whether the persistence of high level of sensation seeking in adults with childhood ADHD contributes to the transition to cocaine dependence.