Adult attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in patients with substance use disorders: A study from Southern India

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Indian J Psychol Med 2017;39:59-62
DOI: 10.4103/0253-7176.198945

Abstract

Context:
Externalising disorders of childhood characterised by attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), conduct disorder and oppositional defiant disorder are well known to predispose an individual to experiment with substances at an early age and the later lead to the development of substance use disorders (SUD). ADHD, a developmental disorder, persists into adulthood in about two-thirds of the cases.

Aims:
In the present study, we aimed to explore the prevalence of ADHD and its subtypes in treatment-seeking patients with SUD in an outpatient setting. Secondarily, we also aimed to compare the ADHD scores in the early onset and late onset subtypes of SUD.

Subjects and Methods:
Adult ADHD self-report scale symptom checklist was administered in 240 patients with SUD. The prevalence of ADHD and the difference in scores in early onset and late onset dependent groups of SUD patients were calculated.

Statistical Analysis:
Independent sample t-test was used to calculate the mean differences, and Chi-square test was used to calculate the difference in the proportion of cases screening positive across subgroups.

Results:
Among the 240 patients with SUD, 135 (56.25%) screened positive for “likely ADHD” and 52 (21.7%) for “highly likely ADHD.” The scores on the inattention domain and the prevalence of “likely ADHD” were significantly higher among the early onset group.

Conclusions:
The results are in agreement with similar studies of larger samples performed worldwide. Routine screening for ADHD in the treatment-seeking patients with SUD will enable the early detection and management of this highly comorbid condition.