

One-year abstinence improves ADHD symptoms among patients with polysubstance use disorder.

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Abstract

INTRODUCTION:

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a common comorbid disorder in patients suffering from substance use disorder (SUD). Individuals with co-occurring SUD and ADHD are more likely than SUD patients without ADHD to have developed SUD at a younger age, be polysubstance users, and need inpatient treatment more often. The present study investigates whether individuals with polysubstance use disorder who remain abstinent for a year after entering treatment have a more substantial reduction in ADHD symptoms than those who relapsed and controls.

MATERIAL AND METHODS:

Subjects were SUD patients (N = 115) and healthy controls (N = 34). ADHD symptoms were assessed using the adult ADHD Self-Report Scale (ASRS). Substance use was assessed by self-reports on the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT) and the Drug Use Disorders Identification Test (DUDIT). Participants were defined as having relapsed if they had an AUDIT score ≥ 8 or a DUDIT score ≥ 2 for women and ≥ 6 for men.

RESULTS:

Patients who remained abstinent for one year reported a substantial reduction of ADHD symptoms compared to patients who relapsed and controls.

CONCLUSIONS:

Abstinence alleviates ADHD symptoms among patients with polysubstance use disorder. We suggest that confirmation of an ADHD diagnosis should follow a period of abstinence to avoid identification of false-positive cases.