Research synopses
RISQ

Predictors of Alcohol and Drag Dependence

Predictors of Alcohol and Drug Dependence

In 2002 in Canada, about 2.2% of the population aged 15 and over reported symptoms of alcohol dependence, and 1.1% of drug dependence. This study looks at the characteristics that distinguish new cases of psychoactive substance dependence among the general population. It also endeavours to determine predictors of substance dependence over a 2-year period and assess variables that differentiate people dependent on substances according to sex and age.
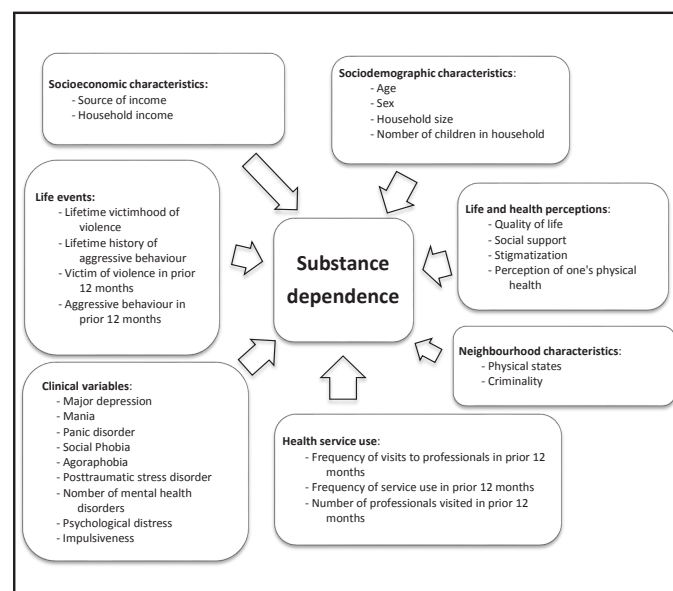
Research Question

Many researchers have established a relationship between certain determinants, risk factors or individual characteristics and psychoactive substance dependence. Substance dependence is often associated with mental and physical health issues, poor treatment outcomes, and inferior social conditions including poverty, lack of education, stigmatization, domestic violence, incarceration and homelessness. Studies on psychoactive substance dependence generally focus on a single substance—for instance, alcohol or cocaine—and not on substances in general (that is, all substances together). Moreover, most of these studies do not track the evolution of psychoactive substance dependence over more than a year. Finally, a number of variables pertinent to this issue, such as service use or neighbourhood characteristics, are generally not considered in those studies. This study attempts to address these gaps.

Objectives and Methodology

This study aimed to identify the socioeconomic, clinical, life perception and service use characteristics that distinguish new cases of substance dependence among individuals in the general population. It also sets out to determine predictors of substance dependence over a 2-year period and asses variables that identify people dependent on substances by sex and age. To this end, the authors used a representative sample of individuals aged 15 to 65 living in an epidemiological catchment area that includes four Montréal neighbourhoods. Data were collected at two time points. At baseline, 2434 people were interviewed between June 2007 and December 2008. Among them, 1823 were seen again between June 2009 and December 2010. Data were collected using the *Canadian Community Health Survey 1.2 (CCHS 1.2)* as well as several other instruments which were adapted and validated

for a French-speaking population. Using the framework presented in Figure 1, various aspects were considered as predictors of alcohol and drug dependence for multivariate statistics.

Figure 1. Comprehensive framework: predictors of substance (alcohol and drug) dependence

Highlights

- The prevalence of psychoactive substance dependence was 5.9% at time 1 and 3.7% at time 2. Psychoactive substance dependence at time 2 persisted in 41.7% of participants (representing 2.2% of the initial sample).

- Participants with substance dependence only at time 2 showed worse clinical conditions, life events, life and health perceptions and neighbourhood characteristics than other participants, yet only 2.5% of them used health services.

- Male sex, younger age, stigmatization and impulsiveness were predictors of substance dependence.

- Among individuals with substance dependence, women were more likely to suffer from social phobia, whereas men were marginally more likely to be victims of stigmatization. Participants over 50 years of age with substance dependence were also more likely to have lower household incomes and less social support than younger people.

Conclusion

According to the study, stigmatization is the strongest predictor of psychoactive substance dependence. Results also show that men, younger people and impulsive individuals are more likely to have substance dependence issues. Unlike the results obtained by other researchers, the mental health disorders examined in the study do not appear to be predictors of substance dependence. However, it is important to note that several mental health disorders, including schizophrenia and personality disorders, were not included in the study parameters.

This study results have important clinical implications for the treatment of psychoactive substance dependence. On the one hand, anti-stigmatization, abuse and relapse prevention programs as well as outreach programs are needed to overcome the reluctance of this clientele to use healthcare services. On the other hand, health professionals should pay more attention to life and health perceptions, and to neighbourhood characteristics of newly identified drug users.

More Information

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KeyWords

/ Predictors
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/ Drugs;
/ Alcohol;
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/ Concurrent disorders;
/ Longitudinal studies;
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