

The Relationship Between Substance Dependency and Depression Among Older Adults

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Abstract

❖ Using data collected from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) in the US, the purpose of the study was to determine if having substance dependency, explicitly alcohol or pain relievers could lead to a major depressive episode within the past year among older adults. Utilizing the NSDUH annual survey data, a secondary analysis was used to examine frequencies of major depression episodes within the past year regarding alcohol dependency and pain reliever dependency, among adults 50 and older (N = 8977). Bivariate analyses revealed a significant relationship between alcohol dependency and major depression episodes and pain reliever dependency and major depression episodes within the past year. Those who experienced pain reliever dependency and alcohol dependency were more likely to report having depression than those who did not have a dependency. In the multivariate model age, gender, alcohol dependence, and pain reliever dependence were significantly related to having a major depressive episode within the past year.

Introduction

Importance of the Study

❖ It was found by the CDC that at the least 15% to 20% of adults older than age 65 in the United States have experienced depression (2013). Symptoms of depression are often overlooked, especially when they coincide with other medical illnesses or life events that occur as people age (CDC, 2013). Approximately 4.6 million Americans report prescription pain reliever misuse in the past 30 days (Mowbray et al., 2015). Many prescribed pain relievers could have addictive side effects. As people age there is an alarming emphasis on prescribed medications to alleviate symptoms.

Purpose of Study

❖ The aim of the study was to view the relationship between substance dependency and major depressive episodes within the last 12 months among adults 50 years and older. The study was primarily focused on alcohol dependency and pain reliever dependency.

Research Questions

❖ What is the relationship between substance dependency and major depressive episodes within the last 12 months among adults 50 years and older.

Hypotheses

❖ It was hypothesized that older adults who reported substance dependency, specifically alcohol and pain relievers, in the past 12 months were more likely to report having a major depressive episode, compared to those who did not report substance dependency.

Significance of the Study

❖ The study could benefit social workers and other helping professionals by increasing awareness on the risk's factors associated to substance dependency and depression among older adults.



Methodology

Research Design

- ❖ Secondary analysis of the data from the 2014 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)
- ❖ The interview process included a combination of computer-assisted personal interviewing, CAPI, and an audio computer-assisted self-interviewing, ACASI.

Sample & Sampling Methods

- ❖ The original study achieved a sample size of 67,901 individuals. A subsample was utilized for the recent study. The subsample consisted of 4,074 males and 4,903 females all age 50 and above.
- ❖ Utilizing the Census Tract, field interviewers were sent out to gather information on eligible participants within selected areas. Those who gave consent to participate, scheduled a time to continue with the interview process. As a sign of appreciation those who completed the interviews received \$30.
- ❖ The sample for the 2014 NSDUH was selected using a of 5 stage stratified sample design that consisted of multiple regions.

Measures

Independent Variable

- ❖ Pain Reliever Dependency in the Past Year and Alcohol Dependency in the Past Year
- ❖ Substance dependency was identified if three or more of the seven dependence criterion from 7 questions was present.

Dependent Variable

- ❖ Adult: Past Year Major Depressive Episode (MDE)

Demographic Variables

- ❖ Age, race, gender, education, marital status, and overall health

Sample Characteristics (N=8,977)

Characteristics	f	%
Gender		
Male	4074	45.4
Female	4903	54.6
Age		
50-64 Years Old	5361	59.7
65 or Older	3616	40.3
Race Origin		
White	6637	73.9
Black and/or African American	905	10.1
Native American/AK Native	123	1.4
Native Hi/Other Pac islander	31	.3
Asian	254	2.8
More than one race	193	2.1
Hispanic	834	9.3
Marital Status		
Married	5379	59.9
Widowed	1085	12.1
Divorced or Separated	1805	20.1
Never Been Married	708	7.9
Education		
Less than high school	1308	14.6
High school graduate	2875	32.0
Some college	2161	24.1
College graduate	2633	29.3
Overall Health		
Excellent	1501	16.7
Very Good	2872	32.0
Good	2715	30.3
Fair/poor	1883	21.0

Results

Chi-Square Test Analysis

Relationship Between Pain Reliever Dependency and Major Depressive Episode (N=8,879)

	Major Depressive Episode (Yes)		Major Depressive Episode (No)	
	n	%	n	%
Pain Reliever Dependency				
Yes	10	37.0	17	63.0
No	493	5.6	8359	94.4

Relationship Between Alcohol Dependency and Major Depressive Episode (N=8,879)

	Major Depressive Episode (Yes)		Major Depressive Episode (No)	
	n	%	n	%
Alcohol Dependency				
Yes	38	22.0	135	78.0
No	465	5.3	8241	94.7

- ❖ Those who reported having a pain reliever dependency were significantly more likely to have experienced a major depressive episode in the past 12 months (37.0%) than those who reported not having a pain reliever dependency (5.6%).
- ❖ Those who reported having an alcohol dependency were significantly more likely to have experienced a major depressive episode in the past 12 months (22.0%) than those who reported not having an alcohol dependency (5.3%).

Logistic Regression Analysis

- ❖ In terms of each contributing variable, the gender variable, specifically being female was a significant predictor of depression (OR= 1.92, p < .001).
- ❖ The age variable also significantly predicted depression, within the 65 and older age group being less likely to experience depression than the 50–64-year-old age group (OR = .410, p < .001).

Logistic Regression Analysis for Alcohol and Pain Reliever Dependency (N=8,977)

	B	SE	OR	P
Age	-.89	.11	.41	< .001
Gender	.65	.10	1.92	< .001
Pain reliever dependence in the past year	1.84	.43	6.27	< .001
Alcohol dependence in the past year	1.49	.20	4.43	< .001
Constant	.80	.61	2.22	.19

Discussion

Strengths

- ❖ The data was gathered from a variety of geographic areas all over the United States.
- ❖ The large sample size allowed the data to be condensed in order to create the subsample of people 50 and above.

Limitations

- ❖ Due to self-reported for those with a major depression episode and/or substance dependency could create bias and screw data.
- ❖ Under-reporting can occur due to stigma.
- ❖ A bigger sample is needed for people that have been identified as having a substance dependency to complete further research.

Implications

Practice

- ❖ There is a lack of knowlegde and training when working with substance abuse among older adults.
- ❖ There are less geriatric helping professionals in the field.
- ❖ Depressive symptoms tends to be associated with the natural part of aging.

Policy

- ❖ Medical regulations in the form of required prior screenings and assessments for potential substance misuse could decrease the risks of older adults becoming dependent on substances.
- ❖ Create an integrated system that targets comorbidities

Research

- ❖ Further explore gender differences when examining the relationship between depression and substance dependency.
- ❖ Study was conducted at a small-scale due to the number of participants that identified as having a substance dependency.
- ❖ A longitudinal study with the specified population of having a substance dependency and being over the age of 55 could lead to further insight into developing a possible solution.

Selected References

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