

Profiles of neuropsychological dysfunction in chronic heroin users

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Thesis ; M.D. 2004

This work was conducted in the Institute of Psychiatry, Ain-Shams University Hospitals, Hotline Service of Substance Abuse and Psychological Hospital in Nozha, Cairo during 2003-2004. The study aimed to assess the neuropsychological profile in chronic heroin users and its correlates. A cross-sectional, case-control, observational study was performed. Thirty educated patients aged between 20-45 years of both sexes, all met the diagnostic criteria of ICD-10 for opioid dependence syndrome were included in this study. The patients were divided into 2 groups according to duration of abstinence : Currently abstinent ≥ 6 weeks and using heroin intravenously for ≥ 2 years on daily basis. Control cases included 15 volunteers with no history of psychiatric and/or medical disorders including substance abuse. ICD-10 symptom check list was done for both patients and controls in order to screen for the presence of any psychiatric disorder. If the member had a disorder other than personality disorder, he would be illegible to continue study, after which the patients group subjected to addiction severity index and Luria Nebraska Neuropsychological Battery, while control group subjected to only Luria Nebraska Neuropsychological Battery. The neuropsychological performance was correlated to the duration of use, number of overdoses, duration of abstinence and addiction severity. The results showed that there was an elevated mean score in motor, rhythm, visual, memory, path gnomonic, left sensory motor and right parieto-occipital scales in heroin group when compared with the healthy control group ; however both groups showed no significant difference when comparing the number of individual having impaired performance. The effect of abstinence duration on the neuropsychological performance of heroin users, correlations of neuropsychological profile to clinical variables and correlation between subscales of ASI and LNNB were studied. The study concluded that the neuropsychological dysfunctions complicate the chronic use of heroin, which may have an impact on prognosis and outcome.