

Disinhibited risky behaviors and plasma serotonin among drug addicts : A case control study

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Aim of the work: To study some aspects of disinhibited and risky behaviors of psychoactive substance dependent patients and to examine their correlation with plasma serotonin levels. Patients & Methods: two groups of Egyptian male subjects age between 18-50 years. Group one included a consecutive sample of 52 hospitalized drug addicts (fulfilling SCID criteria for addiction) after subsidence of withdrawal symptoms. Group two consisted of 32 healthy male volunteers of the same age group collected by snowballing. Members of the two groups were subjected to full psychiatric examination using a specially designed semi-structured interview with special emphasis on substance history. Urine samples for substances of dependence and blood samples to estimate plasma serotonin levels were taken from members of both groups. Psychometric assessments included: 1) Sensation seeking scale (SSS); 2) Self control schedule (SCS); 3) EPQ criminality subscale and 4) Aggression questionnaire (AQ). Results: addiction group showed statistically significant higher sensation seeking, criminality and aggression scores and lower self control scores than the normal control group. Plasma serotonin levels were significantly higher among addicts and showed no correlation to any of these behavioral aspects in both addicts and normal control subjects. Conclusion: the study supported the higher incidence of some aspects of disinhibited risky behaviors among addicts than among normal controls. These behaviors were not correlated to plasma serotonin levels which did not to reflect the expected central brain changes.