

Research enables differentiated profiles in drug-addicted patients to be established

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In the comparison between addicted patients with and without associated violent behavior, it was seen that there were significant differences in different sociodemographic, consumption and psychopathological variables. Credit: Free standard licence

The *Journal of Addictive Diseases* has published a study conducted by researchers in the Department of Psychology and Pedagogy of the NUP/UPVA-Public University of Navarre on the behaviour and treatment of patients with addictions. Specifically, the research has enabled profiles of addicted patients to be established in terms of whether they display associated behaviour of violence and/or whether they have committed criminal acts. As Prof Raúl Cacho pointed out, "this is very important as it enables us to predict the result of the treatment, and therefore, improve it, so that it is rendered more effective, is adapted to the patient and also leads to savings in terms of human and material resources."

A specific contribution of this study has been to analyse violence and crimes, both separately and together. In the view of the researchers, "there is no doubt that this constitutes an important, promising field of study as both phenomena are closely related in clinical practice with addicted patients."

The work, published in the *Journal of Addictive Diseases* is entitled "Differential profile and treatment development of drug-addicted patients depending on [violent behaviour](#) and/or criminal acts". The authors are the researchers José J. López-Goñi, Javier Fernández-Montalvo, Alfonso Arteaga and Raúl Cacho, of the Department of Psychology and Pedagogy of the NUP/UPNA-Public University of Navarre.

The patient sample comprised 252 people (203 men and 49 women). They were addicted patients who received assistance within the out-patients' treatment programme of the Proyecto Hombre Foundation of Navarre. 13.9% of the patients only displayed associated violent behaviour; 33.7% had committed a [criminal act](#) without violence; 25.8% displayed violent behaviour and criminal acts simultaneously; and 26.6% of the sample were addicted patients without violence or crimes.

Monitoring over 3 years

Apart from evaluating the specific characteristics of each group (patients associated with violent behaviour, criminal acts and with both problems together), differential profiles for each group were identified. During the study, which involved monitoring the patients over 3 years, it was determined whether there was a link between the problems of violence and crime with drop-out or otherwise from therapy, and whether these factors also influenced the numbers of new re-entries onto the programme.

The patients were assessed before treatment and they then participated in the programme developed by Proyecto Hombre of Navarre. This is an intervention programme of a cognitive-behavioural type geared towards abstinence and which is run as an out-patient procedure. At the same time, each patient was meticulously monitored in order to determine the retention or early drop-out rate from the treatment, as well as the number of re-entries into the intervention programme once it had ended.

Differentiating profiles

39.7% of patients displayed associated behaviour of violence. "They were people who felt incapable of controlling their violent impulses, whether or not they were associated with substance abuse, in various contexts: family, social or workplace. What is more, in some cases, they resorted to violence as a way of obtaining money to purchase drugs."

In the comparison between addicted patients with and without associated violent behaviour, it was seen that there were significant differences in different sociodemographic, consumption and psychopathological variables. Specifically, the study details that the addicted patients with associated violence were younger, with a higher rate of victimisation

(physical, psychological or sexual), with consumption of greater severity, with more cases of overdose, and with more associated psychopathological symptoms.

On the other hand, the percentage of addicted patients involved in criminal acts was 60.3%. Criminal behaviour was related above all to driving offences, which was followed by drug trafficking crimes. "Significant differences were observed between patients displaying criminal behaviour and those who did not. The patients who perpetrated criminal acts were mainly single men. What is more, they were more likely to display poly-consumption of substances with severer addiction."

As far as the treatment development was concerned (drop-outs and re-entries), the group with [violence](#) and crime had a higher number of drop-outs and re-entries, and their percentages were significantly higher in comparison with the group displaying associated violent behaviour only.

Among their conclusions, the researchers indicate that in view of the results obtained, "there are different patient profiles in terms of the presence or absence of problems of this type, which directly influences the treatment development". In this respect, they stress that "hardly any studies analysing the phenomenon in a joint way have been conducted previously."

Provided by Elhuyar Fundazioa

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