

The Phenomenon of Attempted Suicide Among a Sample of Egyptian Heroin Abusers: A Controlled Clinical and Psychometric Study

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Abstract:

Background: several studies showed that suicidal thoughts and attempts are rather related to the demographical characteristics and psychiatric co-morbidity and family history of suicide of the addictive person. Aim: this study is to look for the phenomenon of suicide in Egyptian heroin patients and what are the risk factors for this phenomenon. Method: a case-controlled clinical and psychometric study of two groups of heroin abusers' one of suicide attempters' and the second is of non-attempters. Demographical, relevant clinical data, and several scales including HDS, HAS, Hopelessness scale, Suicidal Ideation scale and addiction severity index were administered. Results: showed that the most significant risk factors in heroin abusers' who attempt suicide are reported positive family history of suicide, depression and feeling hopeless. Conclusion: heroin abusers who attempted suicide have a hereditary predisposition and/or depression aggravated by their drug abuse, resulting in the occurrence of suicidal attempts in this group of mental patients.

Introduction:

The problem of substance abuse and dependence has been a persistent challenge to mankind since the beginning of the history. Apart from its physical, social, financial and medicolegal problems, threatening of life due to death by overdose or suicide has been a significant consequence of addiction of either alcohol or other addictive substances (Helzer and Przybeck, 1988). The exact relationship between suicidal thoughts or behavior and addiction is still unclear and theories are controversial. Early psychodynamic theories of addiction viewed addiction as a substitution for regressive infantile autoeroticism which was first experienced as pleasurable. Rado in 1933 emphasized the elating effect of drugs (Brehm and Khat Zian, 1997). The initial depression is an emotional state in which intense persistent suffering occurs when some individuals experience frustration. What makes the drug initially becomes so crucial to the user is the ability of the drug to raise self esteem and to alter the depressed mood to elation (Dodes, 1990). More recent theories and studies has shown that suicidal thought, behavior and suicides are rather related to the demographical characteristics and psychiatric co-morbidity and family history of suicide of the addictive person (Murphy et al., 1983 and Roy

et al., 1990). Others considered addiction itself as a kind of self destructive behavior perhaps equivalent to a form of slow suicide. Thus, awareness of the unconscious forces of self destructive behavior in addiction can be useful in its management (Saxon, 1978, Bohn and Meyer 1995).

Aim:

This study is to prove or disprove the recent trend of correlation between current psychiatric disorders symptoms and other This study is to prove or disprove the recent trend of correlation between current psychiatric disorders symptoms and other clinical and demographic factors with the high risk of suicide among a sample of Egyptian heroin abusers'.

Subjects and Methods:

Two groups of addictive patients were selected and recruited in this study over a period of 12 months. The first group consisted of 25 suicide attempters, who survived their attempts. They were selected at Ain shams University poison centre in 2004 and another private hospital in El Giza. The second group included 39 non-attempters addictive group. They were recruited from two private hospitals in Cairo and El Giza