Question: Are sociodemographic variables, childhood adversity or mental health disorders associated with incident drug use in adults who report no prior drug use?

People: 26,935 community dwelling adults enrolled in the National Epidemiological Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions. Participants had to report no history of illicit drug use during the first wave of the study (from 2001 to 2002) for inclusion in the current analysis. Incident drug use was assessed in a second wave of interviews (from 2004 to 2005).

Setting: Community setting, USA; from 2001 to 2005.

Risk factors: Sociodemographic variables: income, race, education, marital status, age, sex and region. Childhood traumatic events: physical abuse, witnessing violence in the home, neglect and sexual assault. Family history of substance use: first-degree relatives (siblings or parents) with a history of problem drinking or problem drug use. Mental health disorders (defined using DSM-IV criteria): any mood disorder (major depression, dysthymia, bipolar I, bipolar II), any anxiety disorder (panic disorder, social phobia, specific phobia, post-traumatic stress disorder, generalised anxiety disorder), any personality disorder (schizoid, schizotypal, paranoid, antisocial, borderline, narcissistic, histrionic, obsessive-compulsive, avoidant, dependent), any alcohol use disorder (alcohol abuse and dependence) and nicotine dependence.

Outcomes: First time illicit drug use (sedatives, tranquillisers, opioids, amphetamines, cannabis, cocaine, hallucinogens, inhalants, heroin and other).

Methods

Design: Prospective cohort study.

Follow-up period: Three years.

Main results

Of the 26,935 participants who reported no history of drug use at baseline 1145 (4.3%) used illicit drugs for the first time during follow-up. The most commonly used substances were cannabis (44.4%), opioids (39.6%, excluding heroin) and sedatives (25.5%). A number of sociodemographic variables were associated with decreased odds of incident drug use (female sex; increasing age; Asian, Hawaiian and Hispanic ethnicity; being married). After adjustment for sociodemographic variables, all measured childhood trauma variables were associated with an increased odds of reporting incident illicit drug use: physical abuse by parent/guardian (OR 2.74, 95% CI 1.95 to 3.88), physical abuse by anyone else (OR 2.05, 95% CI 1.49 to 2.82), witnessed fights at home (OR 2.12, 95% CI 1.70 to 2.66), neglect by parent/guardian (OR 2.25, 95% CI 1.55 to 3.25) and sexual assault (OR 2.55, 95% CI 2.00 to 3.26). Having a family history of substance use disorders was also associated with an increased risk of incident drug abuse (first-degree relative with alcohol problem: OR 1.49, 95% CI 1.27 to 1.74; first-degree relative with drug problem: OR 1.40, 95% CI 1.12 to 1.76). After adjusting for sociodemographic variables, childhood trauma and family history of substance use the following mental health disorders were associated with an increased odds of reported incident drug use: any mood disorder (OR 1.31, 95% CI 1.04 to 1.64), any personality disorder (OR 1.52, 95% CI 1.50 to 2.20), nicotine dependence (OR 1.41, 95% CI 1.09 to 1.83) and any alcohol use disorder (OR 1.96, 95% CI 1.48 to 2.60). The diagnosis of any anxiety disorder was not significantly associated with incident drug use (OR 0.85, 95% CI 0.64 to 1.13).

Conclusions

Childhood trauma, substance use problems among family members, nicotine dependence and a diagnosis of any mood, personality or alcohol use disorder are associated with increased odds of incident drug use among abstaining community dwelling adults.

Abstracted from


Correspondence to: Dr J M Bolton, P2430-771 Bannatyne Avenue, Winnipeg MB R3E 3N4, Canada; jbolton@exchange.hsc.mb.ca

Sources of funding: Manitoba Health Research Council, Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

References


Childhood adversity and certain mental health disorders are associated with increased risk of incident drug use among adults

*Evid Based Mental Health* 2012 15: 28 originally published online March 2, 2012
doi: 10.1136/ebmental-2011-100566

Updated information and services can be found at:

http://ebmh.bmj.com/content/15/2/28

These include:

**References**
This article cites 3 articles, 1 of which you can access for free at:

http://ebmh.bmj.com/content/15/2/28#BIBL

**Email alerting service**
Receive free email alerts when new articles cite this article. Sign up in the box at the top right corner of the online article.

**Topic Collections**
Articles on similar topics can be found in the following collections

- Editor's choice (95)
- Substance dependence (407)
- Neurology (1070)
- Other phobias (49)
- Social phobia (53)
- Depressive disorder (570)
- Panic disorder (51)
- Alcohol dependence (111)
- Epidemiologic studies (631)
- Epidemiology (1570)
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (83)

**Notes**

To request permissions go to:

http://group.bmj.com/group/rights-licensing/permissions

To order reprints go to:

http://journals.bmj.com/cgi/reprintform

To subscribe to BMJ go to:

http://group.bmj.com/subscribe/