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Childhood risk factors for substance abuse in a clinical sample of adult outpatients in Riga Psychiatry and Narcology Centre

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Background

Studies conducted in clinical populations suggest a strong connection between different childhood risk factors and substance use disorder (SUD) in adulthood.

Aim

To examine the associations between self-reported weak academic performance, repetition of a grade, single – parent family, self–reported quality of parent – child relationship, conduct problems in childhood and SUD in adulthood in a sample of outpatients of an addiction clinic.

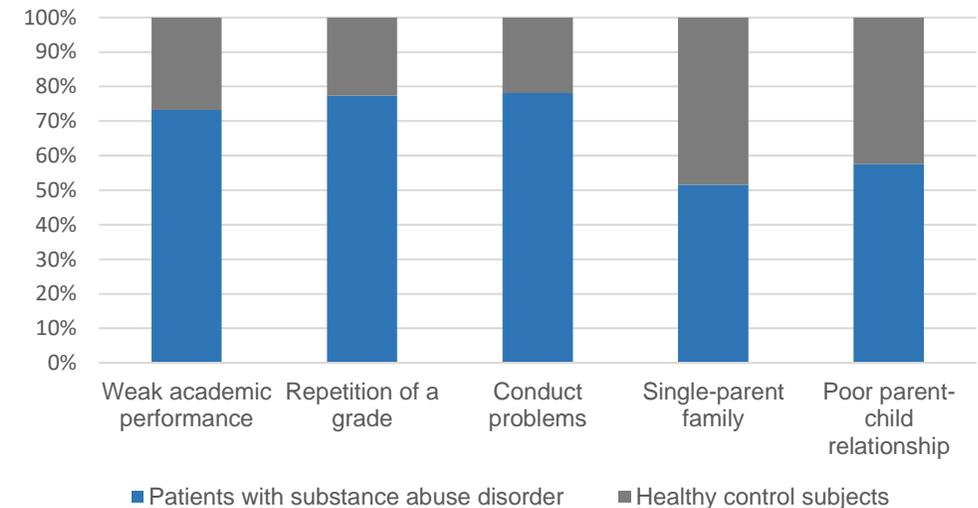
Methods

Adult outpatients were asked to complete a self-report survey. Healthy control subjects (adults without addiction, formally assessed for fitness to drive, firearms licensing etc.) and patients with substance use disorder were examined in relation to self-reported childhood risk factors.

Results

- Self-report surveys were completed by 334 outpatients (mean age 37.4; SD=10.1; 76.3% male), including 97 healthy control subjects.
- The acquired data shows significant connections between poor academic performance ($p<0.000$), repetition of a grade ($p=0.001$), conduct problems in childhood ($p<0.000$) and SUD in adulthood (Figure 1).
- Associations between single-parent family, low quality of parent–child relationship and substance abuse were insignificant.
- Males were found to be 1.5-fold more likely to have substance use disorder comparing to females ($p=0.000$).

Figure 1. Childhood risk factors for substance abuse



Conclusions

According to the obtained data, poor academic performance, repetition of a grade and conduct problems in childhood might be risk factors for developing SUD in adulthood. Children with these risk factors should be the target population for primary prevention of substance abuse.