

Characteristics and gender differences of alcoholic patients treated in an outpatient centre in Barcelona

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Introduction

CAS Forum is an outpatient treatment centre for patients with any substance use disorder in Barcelona (Spain). Placed in health center where they are located other mental health facilities. Attends more than 400 patients each year and the main substances of abuse are Alcohol, Heroin and Cocaine (Figure 1). Patients with alcohol use disorders are the most commonly seen in specialized outpatient treatment centers in our country [1]. They represent about 50 percent of all patients treated in our centers. Data from research studies show a higher prevalence of alcohol consumption in men, however, women drinking excessively develop more medical and psychiatric problems [2] [3]. The higher prevalence of some psychiatric disorders in alcoholic women as well as greater susceptibility to the effects on physical health can negatively affect the outcome of treatment for addiction in women.

Aim of the study

To describe the main demographic, clinical characteristics and gender differences of all alcoholic patients treated in the first six months of 2015 in an outpatient centre in Barcelona (CAS Forum).

Methods

Data of all patients with the clinical diagnosis of alcohol use disorder in the period of study were recorded. The following variables were assessed: sociodemographical and data about other drugs of abuse, other psychiatric disorder diagnosis, family history of addiction or psychiatric disorders and pharmacological treatments. Furthermore, subjects were classified as Responders (R) and Non responders (NR) to treatment according alcohol consumption detected in random urinalysis in the last 6 months: those with equal or less than 20% of positive controls were classified as R and those with more than 20% of positive controls were classified as NR. A comparison of all variables by gender was performed searching for differences in sociodemographic data, comorbid substance use disorders (SUD), non-substance related psychiatric disorders (non SUD-PD) pharmacological treatments and outcome.

Results

From the total of 436 patients who were in treatment in the first 6 months of 2015, 217 patients had a diagnosis alcohol use disorder (Figure 1). Characteristics of alcoholic patients are described in table 1. The first substance use disorder in this patients was nicotine and the second cocaine. The most common psychiatric diagnoses (No SUD) was major depressive disorder (13%). A 12% of alcoholic patients had a diagnosis of personality disorder. Antidepressants and antipsychotics are the drugs most widely used in these patients. Disulfiram was the drug most commonly used (25%) to treat alcoholism and secondly an opioid antagonist (21%). The majority of patients (76%) were responders according to the criteria described. Gender differences are described in table 2. In our patients we found an earlier onset of alcohol consumption in males but more psychiatric family history in females. When compared by gender we found a higher prevalence of depressive disorders (23% vs. 9%; $p=0.01$) and personality disorders (24% vs. 7%; $p=0.001$) in women. Therefore they are receiving more antidepressants (74% vs. 40%; $p<0.001$) and benzodiazepines (47% vs. 30%; $p=0.02$) and also anticonvulsants (50% vs. 31%; $p=0.01$). The outcome of alcoholism treatment in our patients tend to be worst in women (68% vs. 80%; $p=0.056$) but without statistical significance.

Table 1. Characteristics of all alcoholic patients (n=217)

	n/M (SD)	%
Males	151	69,6
Age	48 ±11,6	
Age at first drink	16 ± 3,7	
Family history of alcoholism	115	53
Family history of mental disorders	56	25,8
Substance use disorders		
Nicotine	106	48,8
Cocaine	46	21,2
Cannabis	29	13,4
Other psychiatric disorders No SUD		
Psychosis	12	5,5
Depression	29	13,4
Bipolar	4	1,8
Anxiety	10	4,6
Adaptative	15	6,9
Personality disorders		
Cluster A	3	1,4
Cluster B	14	6,5
Not otherwise specified	9	4,1
Pharmacological treatment		
Antipsychotics	43	19,8
Antidepressants	110	50,7
Anticonvulsants	80	36,9
Benzodiazepines	76	35
Disulfiram	54	24,9
Opioid antagonists	46	21,2
Responders	166	76,5

Figure 1. Main drug of abuse of all patients treated in CAS Forum (n=436)

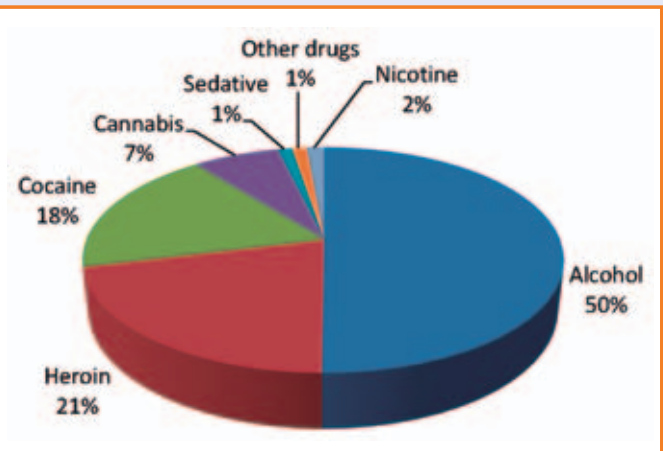


Table 2. Differences between male and female alcoholic patients

	Female patients (n=66)		Male patients (n=151)		t/x ²
	n	M (SD)/%	n	M (SD)/%	
Age		47,8± 10,6		47,9± 12,1	0,9
Age at first drink		16,5± 4,3		15,3± 3,4	0,05*
Family history of alcoholism	32	48,5	83	55	0,3
Family history of mental disorders	23	34,8	33	21,9	0,03*
Substance use disorders					
Nicotine	27	40,9	79	52,3	0,1
Cocaine	10	15,2	36	23,8	0,1
Cannabis	5	7,6	24	15,9	0,09
Other psychiatric disorders No SUD					
Psychosis	4	6,1	8	5,3	0,8
Unipolar Depression	15	22,7	14	9,3	0,007*
Bipolar	0	0	4	2,6	0,1
Anxiety	5	7,6	5	3,3	0,1
Adaptative	5	7,6	10	6,6	0,7
Any personality disorder	16	24,2	10	6,7	< 0,000*
Pharmacological treatment					
Antipsychotics	16	24,2	27	17,9	0,2
Antidepressants	49	74,2	61	40,4	< 0,000*
Anticonvulsants	33	50	47	31,1	0,008*
Disulfiram	12	18,2	42	27,8	0,1
Opioid antagonists	16	24,2	30	19,9	0,4
Benzodiazepines	31	47	45	30	0,01*
Responders	45	68,2	121	80,1	0,056

*Statistical significance

Conclusions

- Alcoholism remain a major medical and psychiatric problems in our population.
- In our patients there is a high comorbidity with other psychiatric disorder especially in women.
- We should consider gender differences when we treat alcoholic patients to improve outcomes.

References

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