

Mindful Continuing Education

Common Comorbidities with Substance Use Disorders

Introduction

1. When two disorders or illnesses occur in the same person, simultaneously or sequentially, they are described as comorbid, and these disorders interact, affecting the course and prognosis of both.

- A. True
- B. False

Part 1: The Connection Between Substance Use Disorders and Mental Illness

2. According to the authors, which of the following accurately describes the connection between substance use disorders and mental illness?

- A. Multiple national population surveys have found that about one-third of those who experience a mental illness during their lives will also experience a substance use disorder and vice versa
- B. Approximately 40 percent of adolescents in community-based substance use disorder treatment programs also meet diagnostic criteria for another mental illness
- C. Substance use disorders co-occur at high prevalence with mental disorders, such as anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, borderline personality disorder, antisocial personality disorder, and psychotic illness
- D. Around half of the individuals with serious mental illness (SMI) also have a substance use disorder

Drug Use and Mental Health Disorders in Childhood or Adolescence Increases Later Risk

3. While early drug use is a strong risk factor for later development of substance use disorders and later occurrence of other mental illnesses, this link is not necessarily causative but rather may reflect shared risk factors including genetic vulnerability, psychosocial experiences, and/or:

- A. Brain characteristics
- B. General environmental influences
- C. Undue stress
- D. Trauma

Common Risk Factors Can Contribute to Both Mental Illness and Substance Use and Addiction

4. In some instances, a gene product may act directly to influence the development of a substance use disorder, as when a protein influences how a person responds to a drug, and in other cases genes can act indirectly to impact substance misuse or mental illness by altering how an individual responds to stress or by increasing:

- A. The likelihood of risk taking and novelty-seeking behaviors
- B. The desire to feel better and do better
- C. The need to relieve pain
- D. The longing to alleviate loneliness or isolation

5. Studies suggest that environmental factors interact with genetic vulnerability to increase the risk for mental illnesses and addiction during:

- A. Trauma and crises situations
- B. Circumstances that produce chronic stress
- C. Particular developmental periods
- D. Periods of illness or when other physical vulnerabilities occur

Stress

6. Early life stress and chronic stress can cause long-term alterations in the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, which affects limbic brain circuits that are impaired in individuals with substance use disorders and other mental illness and that are involved in motivation, learning, and:

- A. Decision making
- B. Adaptation
- C. Complex thought
- D. Information processing

Mental Health Disorders that Contribute to Drug Use and Addiction

7. Neuroimaging suggests that mood disorders are associated with neurobiological changes in brain circuits that are also associated with drug cravings, perhaps partially explaining why patients with substance use disorders report greater cravings when they have comorbid mood disorders.

- A. True
- B. False

What are Some Approaches to Diagnosis?

8. Patients entering treatment for psychiatric illnesses should be screened for substance use disorders and vice versa although accurate diagnosis may be complicated by the similarities between symptoms of potentially comorbid mental disorders and drug-related symptoms, such as:

- A. Withdrawal
- B. Reckless behavior
- C. Irritability
- D. Racing thoughts

What are The Treatments for Comorbid Substance Use Disorder and Mental Health Conditions?

9. Integrated treatment of cooccurring disorders often involves using cognitive behavioral therapy strategies to boost interpersonal and coping skills and using approaches that support:

- A. Cognitive reappraisal and skills enhancement
- B. Problem-solving and relationship enrichment
- C. Regulating distressing emotions and harmful behavior
- D. Motivation and functional recovery

Behavioral Therapies

10. The therapeutic approach recommended for treating trauma-related problems and substance use disorder simultaneously by helping patients learn behavioral skills for coping with trauma/post-traumatic stress disorder and substance use disorder is:

- A. Contingency Management
- B. Seeking Safety
- C. Assertive Community Treatment
- D. Dialectical Behavior Therapy

Part 2: Co-Occurring Substance Use Disorder and Physical Comorbidities

11. Chronic pain and associated emotional distress are thought to dysregulate the brain's stress and reward circuitry, increasing the risk for opioid use disorder.

- A. True
- B. False

Mental Illness

12. Comorbid mental illnesses are associated with greater functional impairments and mortality rates related to:

- A. Physical illnesses
- B. Self-harm and suicide
- C. HIV/AIDS
- D. Fatal accidents

Part 3: The Connection Between Substance Use Disorders and HIV

13. Substance use serves as a powerful cofactor at every stage of HIV, including transmission, diagnosis, treatment, and:

- A. Daily functioning
- B. Symptom severity and persistence
- C. Illness trajectories
- D. Medication adherence

Part 4: Barriers to Comprehensive Treatment for Individual with Co-Occurring Disorder

14. Research shows that only a small percentage of SUD treatment programs and mental health treatment organizations have the capacity to serve dually diagnosed patients, and according to the authors, provision of such treatment can be problematic for each of the following reasons EXCEPT:

- A. Neither primary care physicians or mental health treatment systems have sufficiently broad expertise to address the full range of problems presented by dually diagnosed patients
- B. A lingering bias remains in some SUD treatment centers against using any medications, including those necessary to treat serious mental illnesses
- C. Many individuals who would benefit from treatment are in the criminal justice system, and yet adequate treatment services to treat both drug use disorders and other mental illnesses are often not available within these settings
- D. Social stigma and self-stigma remain very prevalent in reference to mental illness and substance misuse, which limits resources as well as help-seeking
