

Psychological coping styles that increase risk for opioid misuse

Geralyn Datz¹, Regina McConley³, Jessica Pierce², Katherine Czar², B. Todd Sitzman⁴
¹Forrest General Hospital Pain Management Program, Hattiesburg, MS, United States, ²University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, MS, United States, ³University of Alabama at Birmingham, Birmingham, AL, United States, ⁴Advanced Pain Therapy, PLLC, Hattiesburg, MS, United States

Purpose

Researchers advocate for a precautionary approach to risk assessment, where psychological assessment and risk stratification is a routine part of opioid screening. Undiagnosed or untreated psychiatric comorbidities may contribute to aberrant drug taking behaviors. In particular, personality disorders may place patients at risk for medical non-adherence, via negative coping styles. This study investigates how personality characteristics may relate to increased presence of aberrant behaviors in a sample of chronic pain patients.

Method

With IRB approval, personality data obtained from 49 patients consecutively admitted to a outpatient chronic pain program was analyzed. Personality data was obtained from the Million Behavioral Medicine Diagnostic (MBMD). Separate hierarchical regression analyses were used to evaluate two hypotheses: 1) whether anxiety-tension, dejection, and non-conforming scales and 2) emotional-lability, oppositional, and forceful coping scales would predict total SOAPP-R score. Each analysis adjusted for the patient's age, gender, and duration of pain.

Results

Model (1) indicated that MBMD scores and demographic variables significantly predicted SOAPP-R score $F(6,50)=5.76$, $p < .005$. These three predictors accounted for 33.8% of variance in SOAPP-R scores. Of the three predictors, dejection was positively related to SOAPP-R score. Similarly, results for Model (2) demonstrated a significant relationship between MBMD scores and total SOAPP-R score $F(6,50)=4.48$, $p < .005$. These predictors accounted for 27.2% of the variance in SOAPP-R scores. Oppositionality was positively associated with total SOAPP-R score.

Conclusions

Given the controversy surrounding effective opioid prescribing, data from personality assessment can serve as an effective adjunct to risk stratification.