

COULD EMOTIONAL AWARENESS INFLUENCE DRINKING OUTCOMES IN AN ALCOHOL DEPENDENT POPULATION?

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Introduction: Alexithymia has been studied in several addictive disorders with a special interest in alcohol dependence (Thorberg et al., 2009; Taieb et al., 2002). Nevertheless, recent studies failed to demonstrate the relationship with drinking outcomes (de Haan et al., 2012; Stasiewicz et al., 2012). Evaluation of emotional awareness in these populations could be added to specify the deficits of emotions' differentiation and to understand the mechanisms underlying the maintenance of abstinence (Bochand & Nandrino, 2010; Carton et al., 2010).

Aims: We intend to evaluate short and long-term abstinent alcohol dependent subjects in a dimensional approach for alexithymia and emotional awareness, expecting relationship with drinking outcomes.

Methods: Thirty-two abstinent alcohol dependent participants and 28 matched controls were included. The two groups were assessed for anxiety (STAI state and trait) and depression (BDI-II). Alexithymia (TAS 20) and emotional awareness (Emotional Self-Awareness Questionnaire; ESQ) were also evaluated. The severity of alcohol dependence was specified with Alcohol Dependence Severity scale.

Results: Alexithymia was significantly higher in the group of alcohol dependent participants (50.1 vs 45.1; $p=0.049$). Within the alcohol dependent group, ESQ was negatively correlated to the severity of alcohol dependence ($r=-0.29$; $p=0.028$) with subscales "social awareness" and "social skills" negatively correlated to the duration of abstinence ($r=-0.37$; $p=0.03$ and $r=-0.38$; $p=0.01$, respectively).

Conclusions: Alexithymia is significantly higher in the alcohol dependent group, compared to the control group, but within this group, evaluation of emotional awareness may become more interesting to evaluate the characteristics of alcohol dependent subjects and predict their drinking outcomes.