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SENSITIVITY TO REWARD AND SENSITIVITY TO PUNISHMENT AS FACTORS FOR PREDICTING AN ALCOHOL USE DISORDER

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Rationale: Gray's theory of personality distinguishes two personality dimensions: Behavioral Activation System (BAS) and Behavioral Inhibition System (BIS). This construct has been widely used in the field of addictions and the study of impulsivity. BIS and BAS can be measured using the Sensitivity to Punishment and Sensitivity to Reward Questionnaire (SPSRQ). This questionnaire has been carried out in cross-sectional studies related to alcohol misuse, eating disorders, pathological gambling and cannabis misuse.

Objectives: To study Sensitivity to Reward and Sensitivity to Punishment as factors that could predict the development of Alcohol Dependence.

Methods: 380 subjects completed the SPSRQ at the beginning of the study and were followed-up for 4 years. At this point, participants completed a protocol that assessed drinking-related variables and drinking patterns. Statistic was performed using regression analysis.

Results: Low scores obtained in the Reward Sensitivity Subscale was a significant predictor for developing an Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD). High scores obtained in the Punishment Sensitivity Subscale were not significantly related to the subsequent development of an AUD.

Conclusions: Low scores obtained in the Reward Sensitivity Subscale predict a higher risk for the development of Alcohol Dependence. This could be due to more difficulties that these individuals exhibit, despite the negative consequences, when they have to inhibit their seeking behavior and intake of alcohol.