

IMPULSIVITY AND STRESS AS RISK FACTORS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ALCOHOL DEPENDENCE

M. Marin Mayor, E. Verdura Vizcaino, R.A. Codesal Julian, J. Lopez Alvarez, G. Rubio Valladolid

Hospital 12 de Octubre, Madrid, Spain

Introduction: It is well known that impulsivity and stress are risk factors for the development of addictive disorders, and more specifically alcohol dependence. Impulsivity has two dimensions: behavioural inhibition and delay of reward. The Fear-Conditioning paradigm of the Startle response (SR), which refers to the potentiation of the startle amplitude after the exposure to aversive stimulus, can be used as a stress test. The aim of this study was to explore the correlation between impulsivity laboratory tasks and the Fear-Conditioning (FC) paradigm of the SR as risk factors for the development of alcohol dependence.

Methods: The sample included 40 abstinent alcoholic men, who met DSM-IV criteria for Alcohol Dependence and had been abstinent for at least one month. Impulsivity was assessed using two laboratory tests: *Stop-Signal Task (SST)* and *Differential Reinforcement for Low-Rate Responding (DRL6)*. The FC paradigm of the SR was used as a stress test. Patients were compared to 40 matched controls.

Results: We found a positive correlation between SST tasks and the FC paradigm of the SR ($p < 0,05$) and a negative correlation between the DRL6 tasks and the FC paradigm of the SR ($p < 0,05$) in the patient's group. This significant correlation was not found in controls.

Conclusions: Impulsivity and stress are significantly correlated in alcohol dependent patients. This means that while healthy subjects cope with stress, alcohol dependent patients react with higher impulsivity when they are exposed to stress situations and this could lead them to drink alcohol to relieve anxiety and depressive symptoms.