

Addiction: the Burden of Cyclothymic Temperament

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Disorders of the bipolar spectrum (e.g. cyclothymic disorder) and subthreshold manifestations of mood disorders (such as temperamental traits) have been suggested to influence the course of psychiatric diseases. Cyclothymic temperament (as described by Kraepelin and as measured by Akiskal's temperament scale, the TEMPS) has been suggested to be the most morbid and prodromal element in the pathogenic chain of personal disposition to behavioural and emotional problems.

We studied the effects of affective temperaments on psychoactive substance use, on alcohol dependence and opioid dependence. In particular, we wanted to test the hypothesis whether cyclothymic temperament mediates a deleterious effect.

1380 inhabitants of residential student homes in Austria, 116 alcohol dependent patients at the Medical University of Vienna and 101 opioid dependent patients at the Oum El Nour rehabilitation center in Lebanon were investigated. Temperament was assessed using the briefTEMPS-M auto-questionnaire. In opioid dependence, subtypes were assessed according to the LAT interview (www.lat-online.at).

In the college student group, cyclothymic (and irritable) temperament serves as predictor of self-reported nicotine dependence, alcohol abuse and cannabis use. In alcohol dependent patients, cyclothymic temperament influenced the age of onset of alcohol abuse and the age of onset of alcohol dependence. In the opioid dependence group, patients exhibiting symptoms of severe negative childhood development according to the LAT interview (e.g. prenatal trauma, cerebral trauma before the age of 14) showed the highest percentage of cyclothymic temperament.

Our data show that cyclothymic temperament as measured by the briefTEMPS-M is an important negative pathoplastic factor for substance-related addictive disorders.