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GENDER DIFFERENCES IN RISKS AND PATTERN OF DRUG DEPENDENCE IN EGYPT

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Objective: To identify possible differences in the ways that women and men are first exposed to drugs, in their risks of abuse and the pattern of drug dependence.

Methods: Four hundreds and fifty seven of drug dependence who attended Outpatient clinic of Neuropsychiatry Department in Tanta University Hospital along the period from June 2006 to June 2009 were classified into two groups according to gender. The two groups (319 males and 138 females) were assessed using DSM IV structured interview and compared together regarding; age, age of starting drug use, duration of abuse, educational level in years, occupation, marital status, first drug used, number of abused drugs, route of use, possible risk factors, causes of asking help, number of previous treatment trials and comorbid psychiatric disorders.

Results: Males started drug abuse earlier in age than females with longer duration of addiction. Single males are more vulnerable to abuse specially in illiterate group. Drug abuse is more common in female students and in male workers. Drugs that are more commonly abused by males are cannabis followed by opiates then alcohol while in females Tramadol ranked first followed by followed by anticholinergics then cannabis. Peer pressure was the most common motivating factor for drug abuse in males contrary to family troubles and sexual abuse in females. Anxiety disorders are more common in females while depressive disorders were common in males.

Conclusion: Gender differences in drug abuse stresses the importance of strategies of treatment, motives for treatment and prevention of drug abuse in females.