

AAAP 22nd Annual Meeting Poster Abstracts

Poster 29:

Gender Differences in Adolescents Entering Residential Substance Abuse Treatment

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Background: Gender-specific addiction approaches to treatment have emerged for adults, but these modalities have yet to draw from adolescent data. Gender differences and its implications for treatment are misunderstood given that few studies have sufficient numbers of female patients. There is little known about the gender differences in youth seeking addiction treatment and how these might impact clinical services. This study examined gender differences in the clinical characteristics of youth seeking addiction treatment.

Methods: A total of 195 youth entering residential addiction treatment, 52% female, aged 14–18 years, were enrolled. Data was gathered using multiple methods including rater administrated interviews with youth-, parent-, and clinician reports, and medical chart records. The inclusion criteria were meeting DSM-IV criteria for substance dependence and being medically detoxed prior to admission. Patients with severe organic impairment and suicidal/ homicidal ideations were excluded.

Results: Compared to boys, girls were more likely to be sedative dependent, opioid dependent, and nicotine dependent. Girls endorsed more internalized psychiatric symptoms, such as MDD and PTSD, but surprisingly similar externalizing disorders. Girls reported more suicide attempts, sexual abuse, and physical abuse. Girls were more motivated for treatment vs. boys.

Conclusions: Contrary to popular belief, girls are equally and in some cases more addicted to substances vs. boys. The results of this study show that girls may need equal amounts of addiction treatment, but improved gender specific mental health services due to the higher incidence of trauma and psychiatric symptoms. Girls also need more active treatment programming due to their increased motivation for treatment.

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