

Risk Factors of Infectious Disease among Alcohol Dependent Girls and Boys Court-Referred to Treatment

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The 21st century has witnessed the greatest increase in alcohol use disorders among our nation's minors, increasing its potent interactions with risky sex and HIV/AIDS infection. Adolescents are also the age group with the highest rates of multiple partners, unprotected sex, and sexually-transmitted diseases (STDs), all of which are identified markers of HIV/AIDS infection. Childhood abuse and grandiosity (likely manifesting as perceived invincibility) further increase the risk of infectious disease acquisition and transmission among youths. Prior investigations of the health consequences of alcohol use among high risk minors have been limited by insufficient samples of girls with severe alcohol abuse. This study examines the influence of these risk factors on infectious disease acquisition among 102 girls and 93 boys court-referred to residential treatment. Background characteristics, substance abuse, risky sexual behaviors, narcissistic behaviors, and sexually transmitted diseases were assessed at treatment intake. Multivariate regressions were performed to examine the impact of risk factors on risk of sexually transmitted disease (STD) incidence and unprotected sex. Two out of three sexually active youths were not using any contraception, 68% had sex while intoxicated, and 16% entered treatment with at least one STD. Alcohol severity, number of sexual partners, risky sex, and history of sexual abuse were significantly associated with increased risk of STD infection for both boys and girls. Sexually abused girls and boys were more likely to report higher levels of exhibitionism, feelings of estrangement, multiple partners, engaging in risky sex, concerns about HIV/AIDS, and more years of substance abuse than peers without sexual abuse. Findings suggest a need for incorporating education on HIV prevention to effectively improve youth health outcomes and implementing intervention strategies that further connectedness for sexual abuse victims.