

Alcohol Addiction and Co Morbidity of Anxiety

¹Nirmala.N, ²Dr.V. Hemavathy

¹Research Scholer, Sree Balaji College of Nursing, Bharath Institute of Higher Education and Research, Chennai, Tamil Nadu India

²Supervisor Principal Sree Balaji College of Nursing, , Bharath Institute of Higher Education and Research, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

Abstract

Alcohol use disorder and anxiety are co-occurring disorder can cause serious distress and impair daily functioning of an individual. Alcohol is one of the commonly used abusing substance in the world. In U.S 2019, 85.6% of people reported drinking alcohol at some point in their lives, 25.8% of people aged 18 and older reported binge drinking and 14.5 million people aged 12 and older had an alcohol use disorders. Anxiety is a natural part of life, According to the National Institute of Mental Health , It's the natural response to stressful situations. But anxiety go beyond the typical bodily response and one in 10 people suffering from different level of anxiety that are problematic and significantly disruptive to their daily lives. The more anxiety a person have, consume more alcohol to alleviate anxiety, since alcohol induced anxiety last for several hours or even a day after drinking.. Alcohol changes levels of serotonin and other neurotransmitters in the brain which can worsen anxiety feel more anxiety. Sound diagnosis and treatment planning requires to treat this problem effectively.

Key Words: Alcohol, Addiction, Co morbidity, Anxiety.

Introduction

Alcohol depresses the central nervous system, it can produce a sense of euphoria and decrease a persons inhibition. Alcoholism and anxiety as co-occurring disorders, fuel each other called dual diagnosis. commonly exist together within same person.. There are several proposed explanations for the link, including genetics, a persons environment and the brain mechanisms. Researchers have found that anxiety symptoms can lead to alcohol dependence, Both long -term alcohol misuse and alcohol withdrawal can significantly increase anxiety levels. A study conducted with American war veterans in an alcohol treatment programme found 98% reported at least one symptom of anxiety. Matt Kushner a leading researcher In the area of anxiety and alcohol describes- Drinking alcohol leads to greater anxiety, which in turn ,leads to more drinking. People with anxiety disorder use alcohol to cope with anxiety. A theory of “ tension reduction hypothesis” suggests that alcohol used as a self medicating method to reduce stress and anxiety. Alcohol use can cause new onset of anxiety and worsen pre – existing anxiety symptoms. Many individuals will use alcohol as an unhealthy coping tool to reduce symptoms of anxiety and even limited alcohol use with anxiety might develop an unhealthy relationship with alcohol.

Alcoholism and Anxiety

What Is Alcoholism

It is a chronic disease characterised by uncontrolled drinking and preoccupation with alcohol. Alcoholism is the inability to control drinking due to both physical and emotional dependence on alcohol.

What is Anxiety

Anxiety is an intense excessive and persistent worry and fear about everyday situation. Fast heart rate, rapid breathing, sweating and feeling tired are the symptoms. Anxiety can be normal emotion and it is a brains way of reacting to stress, in stressful situation such as public speaking or taking a test. This feeling of anxiety would generally subside after upsetting situation or stressor has been resolved, If feeling of anxiety persist may experience excessive fear or worry that doesn't go away it will interfere with daily living. The feeling of anxiety may be present in the absence of fear or stressor called anxiety problem. Person using

alcohol to relieve anxiety is an unhealthy way of treating the symptom.

Signs of Alcohol Misuse

Drink alcohol frequently or excessively- According to ADAA This would be four or more per week or five or more drinks in one day.

Feel that need to consume alcohol and unable to stop- means feel that need to have a drink to function for day today life.

Feel that need to have more drinks throughout the day to keep going.

Feel that need to continue to drink to prevent symptoms of withdrawal.

Feel guilt, shame, remorse, other intense emotions about drinking. The intense shame feeling actually drive to deink more to escape from uncomfortable feelings.

Symptoms of Anxiety

- Sweating
- Exhaustion
- Panicking
- Rapid breathing
- Restlessness
- Shaking/trembling
- Increased blood pressure
- Feeling of nervousness and body tenseness
- Inability to control worry
- Gastrointestinal problems
- Hallucination
- Vomiting
- Seizures

Chemical Reactions Happen in the Brain

Alcohol has an effect on many chemicals in the brain including GABA, serotonin and dopamine and when these brain chemicals are altered ,it can throw off how the body reacts in everyday situations. Alcohol induce panic due to its effects on GABA a chemical that normally has a relaxing effect. Mild amounts of alcohol stimulate GABA causing feeling of relaxation, but heavy drinking can deplete GABA increased tension and anxiety.

Types of Anxiety Related to Alcoholism

There are several types of anxiety disorders.

Generalized anxiety disorders-Feel excessive, unrealistic worry with little or no reason.

Panic disorder- Feel sudden, intense fear that being on a panic attack with sweat,chest pain,bounding heartbeat,choking or heart attack.

Social anxiety disorder-Called social phobia. The individual feel overwhelming, worry and self-consciousness about everyday social situations.

Other anxiety disorders-Some other anxiety disorders are can be more dangerous like Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

Alcohol as Self Medication for Anxiety

Alcohol tends to be the most common method of self medication and most commonly abused substance. When the time of great anxiety many use to turn towards substances in the way to manage anxiety symptoms known as 'self-medicating' by that brain will train for dependent on alcohol. As time goes on it takes larger amount to achieve the same effect. As body experience withdrawal the anxiety gets worse and alcohol as the only solution to overcome the discomfort. . Other people use alcohol as self medication to cope with unpleasant memories or feelings stemming from the past such as unresolved traumatic incidents. Others use alcohol to face situations that frighten them to stay focused on tasks throughout the day.

Dual Diagnosis of Alcoholism and Anxiety

When alcoholism and anxiety fuel each other this is known as a dual diagnosis. Approximately 7.9 million Americans classify as dual diagnosis. Alcoholics are much more likely to suffer from anxiety and other mental health condition than non alcoholics . similarly an individual with a mental health condition is much more likely to develop alcoholism than an individual without a mental health disorder. Many individual with mental health issues turn to alcoholism as self medication. In the past this dual problems were rarely treated together, now after a greater understanding this dual problems be tackled simultaneously.

Treatment of Dual Diagnosis of Alcoholism and Anxiety

Treating this dual diagnosis is more complicated. A comprehensive recovery plan is the safest and most effective way to overcome this co-occurring disorder. This plan incorporate various therapies that address both alcohol abuse and anxiety. It is best treated under the care of medical professional in a rehab setting programmes provide various types of therapy with combined drug therapy aimed at treating the whole person.

Self-Care Measures to Treat the Dual Problem

- Alternative practices like aromatherapy, mindfulness meditation, yoga, massage, or hypnotherapy
- Deep breathing exercises
- Seeking support from people you trust
- Taking care of physical health
- Lifestyle changes- Includes sleep regularly, limit caffeine and alcohol, eat consistent and healthy meal, focus relaxation technique, think positive thoughts, count slowly 1 to 10 during anxiety, and focus on positive emotions
- Participating in peer support groups for people with anxiety

Conclusion

Co-morbid of alcohol use and anxiety disorder are develop independently and ample evidence supporting the existence of a strong relationship between anxiety and alcohol use and its disorders. Much remains unknown regarding the nature of the relationship. More research examining particular circumstances the anxious individuals are more likely to self medicated. The feelings of anxiety and levels of alcohol use has not been as extensively reviewed to be conducted. A brief discussion about the relationship and difference between factors affecting onset, maintenance and relapse in the alcohol anxiety relationship will to be studied in future.

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