

The Impact of Caregiver Alcoholism on Youth and Families

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Disclosure

Dr. Sidhu receives royalties from the American Psychiatric Association for writing continuing medical education questions for the journal *FOCUS*

Resources

National Institutes of Alcohol and Alcohol Abuse
(<http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/>)

National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc.
(<https://ncadd.org/about-addiction/alcohol-drugs-and-crime>)

OUTLINE

I) Epidemiology

II) Impact of Caregiver Alcoholism on Children and Families

I) Physical

II) Emotional

III) Cognitive

IV) Social

III) Solutions/Treatments

Much of the research presented here is in the form of association, and not necessarily causation

Alcoholic Parents

Alcoholic parents may well have experienced traumatic childhoods themselves, as child victimization is a significant risk factor for the development of alcohol and drug problems in adulthood, and this risk is especially high for females but also present for males

For people with traumatic childhoods, alcohol/drugs are most commonly used:

- As a coping mechanism
- To reduce feelings of isolation/loneliness
- Self-medication of mental health issues
- To gain control, improve self-esteem and self-empowerment
- As a form of self-destructive behavior

Epidemiology of Alcohol Use in Adults and Youth

Adult Epidemiology

25% of people 18 and older admit to binge drinking recently

16.6 million adults in the U.S. have an Alcohol Use Disorder or AUD
(9.4% of men and 4.7% of women)

3rd leading preventable cause of death (88,000 annually)



20% of adult Americans have lived with an alcoholic relative while

Youth Statistics

700,000 teens (3.2 % of females and 2.5% of males) have an AUD

35% of 15 year olds have abused alcohol, and 23% of 12-20 year olds report drinking within the past month (23% males, 22.5% females)

Children of alcoholics are four times more likely than other children to become alcoholics themselves

Impact of Caregiver Alcoholism on Physical Health

QUESTION 1

Which of the following types of cancer has been linked to alcohol consumption that exceeds moderation (> 2 drinks per day)?

- A) Brain
- B) Bone
- C) Blood (Leukemia/Lymphoma)
- D) Breast
- E) Lung

Impact of Alcohol on Physical Health

Nearly 50% of all **liver disease deaths** (70,000) annually are alcohol related

Alcohol consumption that exceeds moderation (>2 drinks per day) increases risk of oral, esophageal, pharyngeal, colorectal, liver, pancreatic, and breast **cancer**, and very heavy consumption (4 drinks or greater daily) can also increase risk for endometrial, gallbladder, ovarian, prostate, and small intestine cancer.

While < 1% (0.7%) of children are born with **Fetal Alcohol Syndrome**, 5% are born with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD). According to the CDC, 7 to 8% of pregnant mothers continue to drink alcohol despite massive education campaigns aimed at this problem. FASD is associated with **hyperactivity, impulsivity, growth retardation, facial anomalies, and cognitive problems**

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6128a4.htm>

www.aacap.org

<http://www.cancer.org/cancer/cancercauses/dietandphysicalactivity/alcohol-use-and-cancer>

<http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/alcohol-health/overview-alcohol-consumption/alcohol-facts-and-statistics>

Impact of Alcohol on Physical Health of Children

Additionally, mothers who are abusing alcohol may be more likely to be malnourished and to not receive appropriate prenatal care during their pregnancies, further placing their children at risk for birth defects

Given the high rate of neglect in children of alcoholics, it is highly likely that things like yearly physicals, basic dentition, and eye exams for corrected vision will go forgotten in some alcoholic households

QUESTION 2

Alcohol increases which of the following phases of sleep in the second half of the evening?

- A) Stage I
- B) Stage II
- C) Stage III
- D) Stage IV
- E) Beta-Wave

Alcohol and Sleep

30% of people with difficulty sleeping use alcohol as a remedy

Dose-dependent (1 drink regularly +/-, approaching 3-4 drinks per night negative impact)

Improves initiation and 1st half of sleep, greatly disrupts 2nd half

REM and Light Sleep (Stage I) follow the same pattern:

- Decrease in 1st half of the night

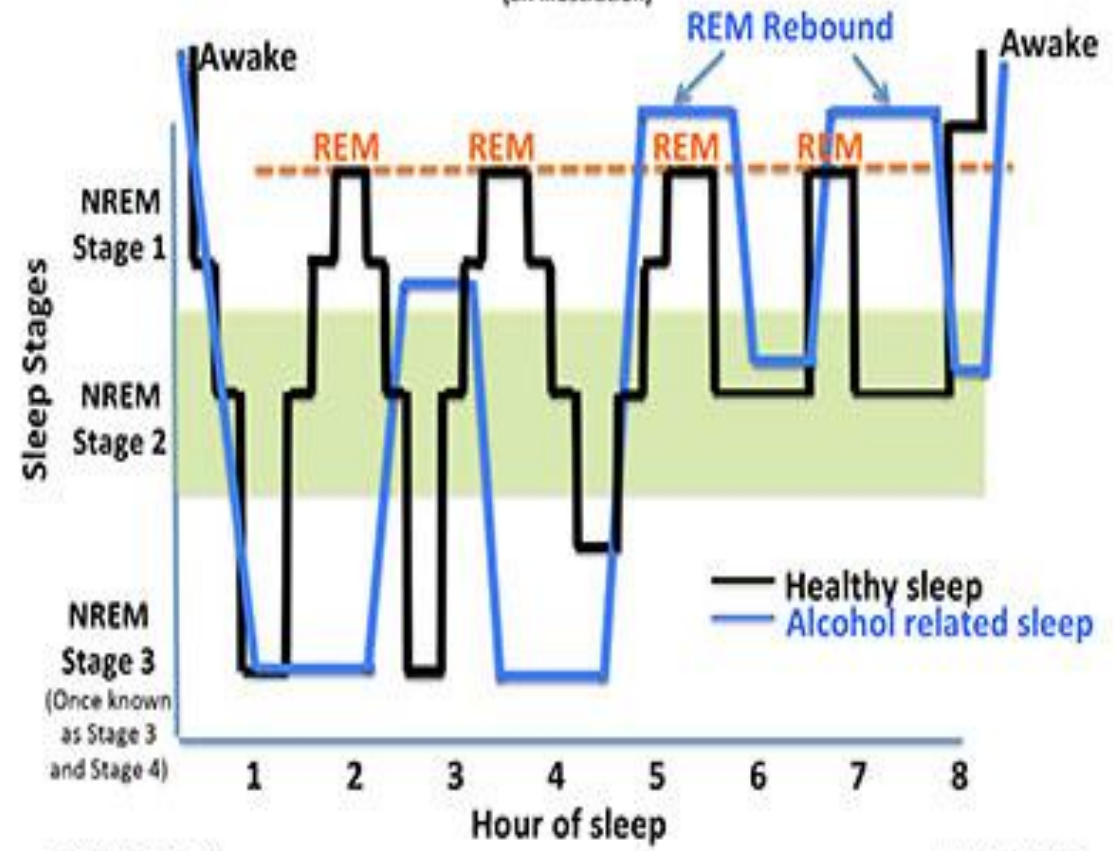
- Rebound increase well beyond baseline in 2nd half of night

<http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/arh25-2/101-109.htm>

Result: 2nd half of the night is filled with increased awakenings and

Healthy vs. Alcohol-Related Sleep Patterns

(an illustration)



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Impact of Parental Alcohol Use on the Health of Children

DWI/DUI:

> 1 million arrests annually

3rd most common crime in the United States

#1 cause of death, injury, and disability of those under 21

40% of traffic fatalities alcohol-related

Daily: 36 MVA deaths and 700 injuries due to alcohol

***Not only places children at risk for great harm, but also places children at risk for having their caretakers injured/killed, arrested, and without drivers licenses for transportation**

Question 3

Which of the following developmental problems is seen most frequently in children living with an alcoholic parent?

- (A) Cognitive
- (B) Behavioral
- (C) Psychological
- (D) Social
- (E) Physical (health)

Although all of these developmental issues may be present in children of alcoholics, cognitive problems are observed most frequently

Impact on Cognitive Development in Children

Impact on Cognitive Development in Children

Children of alcoholics have been found to have:

- Lower full-scale IQ scores

- Lower score on performance tests (abstract and conceptual reasoning)

- Lower verbal scores

Impact on Cognitive Development in Children

Even in educated alcoholic families with parents living in the home, children were found to have:

- Lower IQ
- Lower arithmetic scores
- Lower reading scores
- Lower verbal scores

*Lower does not mean below normed values but rather in the low-normal range

Impact on Cognitive Development in Children

Even children of alcoholics who are considered to perform differently from their peers academically, still:

- They often underestimate their own competence

- Their mothers often underrate the abilities of their child

***These perceptions affect motivation, self-esteem, and future performance**

Impact on Cognitive Development in Children

School performance may be a more practical measure of cognitive health. Children of alcoholics demonstrate:

- Academic problems in school
 - Repeating/failing grades
 - Failing to graduate from high school
 - Requiring referrals to school mental health professionals
 - Truancy
 - School behavioral problems

*While cognitive issues may partially explain this, these cognitive issues are compounded by decreased motivation and stress in the home environment

Poor School Performance Directly Linked to
Decreased Earning Potential

Impact on Social Issues Involving Children

Impact on Social Issues Involving Children

Households with adult alcoholics have a higher rate of :

- Divorce
- Parental anxiety
- Parental affective disorders
- More frequent/undesirable changes in the family/life situation

Impact on Social Issues Involving Children

Families of alcoholics have:

- Lower levels of cohesion
- Lower levels of expressiveness
- Lower levels of independence
- Increased family conflict

Children of alcoholics are also at greater risk for teen pregnancy (1)

Alcoholism and Poverty

Longer durations of poverty and involuntary unemployment significantly predict heavy drinking, independent of gender, age, race/ethnicity, marital status, prior heavy drinking, and present socioeconomic status (1)

Neighborhood poverty is also a significant predictor of alcohol consumption (2)

Question 4

What percentage of violent crimes (in a sample of nearly 2 million convicted offenders in jail) involve alcohol?

- A) 1%
- B) 10%
- C) 25%
- D) 40%
- E) 70%

Parental Alcohol Use and Violence/Abuse

Alcohol is a factor in 40% of all violent crimes (Department of Justice), including closer to 50% of homicides and assaults

Associated more than any other drug with murder, rape, assault, child, and spousal abuse

Domestic Violence: Up to 69% of incidents involve alcohol. This includes domestic violence versus spouses/significant others and other family members. Children who witness domestic violence against their maternal caregiver are 50% more likely to abuse alcohol and/or drugs.

<https://ncadd.org/about-addiction/alcohol-drugs-and-crime>

Parental Alcohol Use and Violence/Abuse

40% of child victimizers/abusers report drinking at the time of the abuse, and 50% of these abusers had been consuming alcohol for 6 or more hours preceding the abuse

Children of alcohol/drug-abusing parents are three times more likely to be abused and four times more likely to be neglected than peers

The overall level of stress in alcoholic homes can make these parents especially at risk for lashing out at their family members, and the presence of alcohol decreases the inhibition to engage in violence

Juvenile Crime and Alcohol/Drugs

80% of children arrested in state juvenile justice systems are:

- Under the influence of alcohol/drugs while committing crimes
- Test positive for drugs
- Are arrested for committing an alcohol or drug offense
- Admit to having a substance abuse or addiction problem

*While 1,900,000 out of 2,400,000 juveniles had substance abuse involvement, less than 70,000 had received treatment

<https://ncadd.org/about-addiction/alcohol-drugs-and-crime>

Impact on Emotional and Behavioral Development in Children

Mental Health

Children of Alcoholics have:

- Higher rates of depression (more depressive affect, more frequent and extreme depressive episodes than peers)
- Higher rates of anxiety
- More symptoms of generalized stress, including low self-esteem
- A pervasive sense of a lack of control

*Some of these symptoms can reverse when parents stop drinking

Behavioral Issues

Children from homes with alcoholic parents demonstrate increased:

-Conduct-disordered behavior:

-Lying

-Stealing

-Fighting

-Truancy/School Behavioral Problems

-Hyperactivity

-Impulsivity

Emotional Issues

Many children find themselves in a bind between:

- Not having their own needs met
- Forced parentification at an early age, especially older children
- Leading to the loss of a typical childhood
- The inability to form close friendships given inconsistency
- The inability to perform well in school given inconsistency

Emotional Issues

The result of these can then be:

Needs not met: **lack of empathy, low self-esteem**

Forced parentification: **lifelong caretaker, avoidance of responsibility, desire to not have their own children/families**

Leading to the loss of a typical childhood: **grief/depression**

The inability to form close friendships given inconsistency: **social isolation and the inability to develop social skills**

The inability to perform well in school given inconsistency: **decreased earning potential, increased unemployment, decreased self esteem**

Emotional Issues

Common emotions in children of alcoholics:

Guilt: unable to care for parent/family, view themselves as the cause

Anxiety: worry constantly about abuse, health issues, financial/housing

Embarrassment: of family behavior in public or of clothing/housing

Fear of Intimacy: inability to trust people via repeated disappointments

Confusion: via inconsistent parental behavior and environment

Anger/Frustration: can also include anger and enablers in the family

Depression: sense of pervasive despair and hopeless/helpless

20 Item Questionnaire from Al-Anon

Did you grow up with a problem drinker? If so:

- 1) Do you constantly seek approval and affirmation?
- 2) Do you fail to recognize your accomplishments?
- 3) Do you fear criticism?
- 4) Do you overextend yourself?
- 5) Have you had problems with your own compulsive behavior?
- 6) Do you have a need for perfection?
- 7) Are you uneasy when your life is going smoothly, continually anticipating problems?
- 8) Do you feel more alive in the midst of a crisis?
- 9) Do you still feel responsible for others, as you did for the problem drinker?
- 10) Do you care for others easily, yet find it difficult to care for yourself?

20 Item Questionnaire from Al-Anon

- 11) Do you isolate yourself from other people?
- 12) Do you respond with fear to authority figures and angry people?
- 13) Do you feel that individuals and society in general are taking advantage of you?
- 14) Do you have trouble with intimate relationships?
- 15) Do you confuse pity with love, as you did with the problem drinker?
- 16) Do you attract and/or seek people who are compulsive or abusive?
- 17) Do you cling to unhealthy relationships because you are afraid of being alone?
- 18) Do you often mistrust your own feelings and the expressed feelings of others?
- 19) Do you find it difficult to identify and express your own emotions?
- 20) Do you think someone's drinking may have affected you?

Solutions/Treatments

Resiliency

What contributes to resiliency in children of alcoholics?

Those who go on to function well as adults have:

- Other adults and people who were able to give them positive attention
- Average to strong communication skills
- Average intelligence or beyond
- A caring attitude
- A desire to achieve
- A belief in self-help

Resiliency

Children of alcoholic parents are less likely to become alcoholics themselves when they have a parent who:

- Is consistent
- Sets limits
- Follows through on plans
- Maintains daily rituals such as mealtimes
- Maintains holiday rituals

Solutions/Treatment

Be sure to refer parents to treatment

Typically, substance abuse treatment is divided into:

- Acute inpatient detoxification
- Long-term residential treatment
- Ongoing outpatient therapy (Motivational Interviewing, Harm Reduction)
- Ongoing outpatient med-assisted treatment (Naltrexone, Acamprosate, Naloxone, Methadone, Suboxone)

Solutions/Treatment

Evaluate children for mental health, behavioral, and/or emotional issues

Consider family therapy as substance abuse tends to have a profound impact on the entire family

Identify additional supports for the child, including extended family, friends, or other community supports (youth group leaders, spiritual leaders, big brothers/sisters, mentors, teachers)

Solutions/Treatment

In the case of severe ongoing abuse and neglect, a child protective services and/or tribal social services report will need to be made

Alternative living arrangements can be made via other caring relatives and/or therapeutic foster care

Highly important to continue screening children for the development of substance use disorders of their own and school failure as well