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Patients with Alcohol Use Disorder and Withdrawal



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Discussion

- Discuss the relationship between substance abuse and addiction
- Recognize patterns often found in alcohol use disorder
- Identify some of the signs and symptoms of alcohol withdrawal
- Describe the evaluation and treatment of different levels of alcohol withdrawal syndrome

Substance Abuse and Addiction

Substance Abuse and Addiction

- Substance use disorder (SUD): an uncontrolled use of a substance that has a negative effect on the patient's day-to-day life, substances can be:
 - drugs
 - tobacco
 - alcohol

Substance Abuse and Addiction

- Substance use disorder (SUD): an uncontrolled use of a substance that has a negative effect on the patient's day-to-day life, substances can be:
 - drugs
 - tobacco
 - **alcohol**

Substance Abuse and Addiction

- Substance use disorder (SUD): an uncontrolled use of a substance without regard to harm or consequence
- Daily functions and activities of daily living can become impaired
- Addiction is a severe form of SUD

Substance Abuse and Addiction

- SUD can cause changes in brain structure and function due to regular substance use, can cause patient to have:
 - cravings
 - possible personality/behavioral changes
 - abnormal movements

Substance Abuse and Addiction

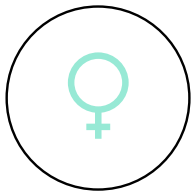
- These changes can affect the patient's:
 - judgement
 - decision-making ability
 - behavior
 - learning
 - memory
 - tolerance to the substance

Substance Abuse and Addiction

- Symptoms of SUD:
 - impaired control
 - social problems
 - risky use
 - drug effects

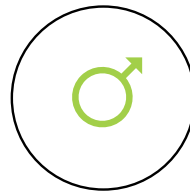
Heavy Drinking

Heavy Drinking



WOMEN

More than 3 drinks per day
More than 7 drinks per week



MEN

More than 4 drinks per day
More than 14 drinks per week

One Drink

One drink: definition

Beer: (approximately 5% alcohol) -
355 ml (12 oz)

Malt liquor: (approximately 7%
alcohol) - 237-266 ml (8-9 oz)

Wine: (approximately 12% alcohol) -
148 ml (5 oz)

Hard liquor or spirits: (approximately
40% alcohol) - 44 ml (1.5 oz)

Statistics

Approximately 1 out of 14 men, 1 out of 25 women, and 1 out of 60 adolescents (12-17 years of age) meet alcohol use disorder criteria

Alcohol withdrawals cause over a quarter of a million visits to the emergency department each year

Over 800 deaths per year are caused from alcohol withdrawal

Statistics

Deaths related to alcohol use disorder (AUD) increased more than 20% during the years of 2020 and 2021

About 10% of patients who frequently seek medical care for

Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD)

- Includes a pattern of using alcohol that causes problems with:
 - controlling alcohol use
 - developing a tolerance to the effects of alcohol
 - requiring more alcohol to get the same effect
 - being preoccupied with alcohol
 - continuing to use alcohol even when it causes problems

Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD)

- Includes a pattern of using alcohol that causes problems with:
 - developing a tolerance to the effects of alcohol
 - requiring more alcohol to get the same effect
 - being preoccupied with alcohol
 - continuing to use alcohol even when it causes problems

Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD)

- Includes a pattern of using alcohol that causes problems with:
 - having withdrawal symptoms with rapid decrease or stopping use

Alcohol Withdrawal

Alcohol Withdrawal

- Patients with heavy and/or prolonged alcohol use, withdrawal symptoms can occur when use is reduced or discontinued
- Symptoms of alcohol withdrawal can occur within hours or up to 4 to 5 days after the person has had their last drink

Alcohol Withdrawal

- For patients who drink heavily who suddenly stop drinking instead of gradually decreasing, withdrawals from alcohol can be life-threatening
- Medical support can be essential for those patients who have withdrawal symptoms

Alcohol Withdrawal

- A small number of these patients will need close medical monitoring or “detoxing” to manage severe and possibly dangerous symptoms



Severe or Complicated Withdrawal – Risk Factors

History	Comorbidities	Age	Duration
Presentation	Medication and substance abuse	Blood alcohol levels	Psychiatric disorders

Alcohol Withdrawal Symptoms

- High heart rate and blood pressure
- Tremors
- Depression or anxiety
- Moodiness or inability to sleep
- Sweating
- Nausea/vomiting
- Seizures
- Delirium tremens

Alcohol Withdrawal Syndrome

Alcohol Withdrawal Syndrome (6-10 hours)

Anxiety

Restlessness/insomnia

Irritability/agitation

Tremors/diaphoresis/headaches

Nausea/vomiting/anorexia

Tachycardia (mild), hypertension

*Also known as “the shakes”

Alcohol Withdrawal Syndrome (12-36 hours)

**Auditory, visual, or tactile
hallucinations**

Persecutory/paranoid delusions

Convulsions

***Also known as “rum fits” or “the
horrors”**

Alcohol Withdrawal Syndrome (24-72 hours)

Speech, orientation, or perception disturbances

Changes in attention and awareness

Fluctuating levels of consciousness

Tachycardia, hypertension, hyperthermia

***Delirium tremens**

Evaluation of Alcohol Withdrawal Syndrome

Evaluation of Alcohol Withdrawal Syndrome

- Patients who have consumed alcohol recently
- Patients who drink regularly or heavily

Evaluation of Alcohol Withdrawal Syndrome

- Patients in a hyperadrenergic state
- Patients having seizures

Evaluation of Alcohol Withdrawal Syndrome

- Includes questions:
 - Are you experiencing any unusual symptoms since you stopped drinking?

**Alcohol Withdrawal
Triage Tool (AWTT)**

**Luebeck Alcohol
Withdrawal Risk
Scale (LARS)**

**Alcohol Withdrawal
Severity Scale
(PAWS)**

Predictor Tools for Severe Alcohol Withdrawal Syndrome

**Brief Alcohol
Withdrawal Scale
(BAWS)**

**Clinical Institute
Withdrawal
Assessment of Alcohol
Scale, Revised
(CIWA-Ar)**

**Short Alcohol
Withdrawal Scale
(SAWS)**

**Severity of Ethanol
Withdrawal Scale**

Alcohol Withdrawal Syndrome: Severity Score

CIWA Score

(The Clinical Institute Withdrawal Assessment for Alcohol)

CIWA Score

The Clinical Institute Withdrawal Assessment of Alcohol Scale

- Measures severity of withdrawal symptoms and addresses 10 items

CIWA Score

The Clinical Institute Withdrawal Assessment of Alcohol Scale

- Measures severity of withdrawal symptoms and addresses 10 items
 - anxiety
 - agitation
 - altered mental status or confusion
 - auditory disturbances

CIWA Score

The Clinical Institute Withdrawal Assessment of Alcohol Scale

- Measures severity of withdrawal symptoms and addresses 10 items
 - tactile disturbances
 - visual disturbances
 - headaches
 - nausea and/or vomiting

CIWA Score

The Clinical Institute Withdrawal Assessment of Alcohol Scale

- Measures severity of withdrawal symptoms and addresses 10 items
 - diaphoresis or sweating
 - tremors

Questionnaire Score

7 or below – mild withdrawal symptoms

8-15 – moderate withdrawal symptoms

16 or more – severe withdrawal symptoms

CIWA Score

The Clinical Institute Withdrawal Assessment of Alcohol Scale

- Manage and monitor the patient's response to treatment
- Used to facilitate a successful recovery and minimize complications

CIWA Score

The Clinical Institute Withdrawal Assessment of Alcohol Scale

- For use in the outpatient and inpatient settings

Alcohol Withdrawal Treatment: Medications

Alcohol Withdrawal Treatment: Medications

Three main classes of medication

- Benzodiazepines - used to treat anxiety
- Barbiturates - a type of anticonvulsants
- Other anticonvulsants

Alcohol Withdrawal Treatment: Medications

Medication options

- Lorazepam
- Diazepam
- Chlordiazepoxide
- Midazolam
- Phenobarbital
- Carbamazepine
- Gabapentin
- Valproic acid

When is Inpatient Treatment Indicated for Alcohol Withdrawals?

When is Inpatient Treatment Indicated?

- CIWA-Ar score of greater than 18, score of 19 or greater indicates:
 - severe withdrawals
 - possible impending delirium tremens

When is Inpatient Treatment Indicated?

- Progressive symptoms of:
 - hypertension
 - tachycardia
 - diaphoresis
 - tremors

When is Inpatient Treatment Indicated?

- Change in mental status
- Seizures or convulsions
- Pregnant patients

Considerations for Outpatient Treatment

- Patients who have no significant withdrawal symptoms and show a blood alcohol content of zero are at low risk of developing any dangerous withdrawal symptoms

Considerations for Outpatient Treatment

- Patients showing significant signs of withdrawal with a high blood alcohol concentration (BAC) should have a specific plan in place for withdrawals

Considerations for Outpatient Treatment

- Disposition should be determined based upon ability to return for care or follow up if their condition worsens or their ability to access alcohol

Considerations for Outpatient Treatment

- When considering the safety of outpatient treatment, determine the capacity of friends or family to monitor the patient as well as the capabilities of the outpatient treatment facility

Outpatient Treatment of Alcohol Withdrawal Syndrome

Safety factors

- Healthy, physically and mentally
- Stable living situation
- Support system in place
- Ability to return for further care
- Withdrawal history

Outpatient Treatment of Alcohol Withdrawal Syndrome

Safety factors

- Other medications
- Ability to get and take medications as prescribed

Summary

- Alcohol use disorder can lead to withdrawal symptoms that may require close medical monitoring and treatment
- Evaluation tools can help predict severe withdrawals and help to guide care for the patient experiencing alcohol withdrawal syndrome
- Severe cases of alcohol withdrawal syndrome can be life-threatening

Summary

- Alcohol withdrawal syndrome can be managed in an outpatient setting or in a hospital

Thank You!



Patients with Alcohol Use Disorder and Withdrawal
Leah Rivera, RN, BSN

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