



Service Priorities and Programmes
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Cognitive Profile and Emotional Health among Young People who Abuses Ketamine

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Introduction

Ketamine abuse has become very common among young people in Hong Kong, which results in significant health and lifestyle problems, role dysfunction, as well as co-morbid emotional disorders. This study hypothesized that persons who abuse ketamine have significant difficulties in emotions management, which results in emotional disorders and lifestyle issues.

Objectives

The study examines the cognitive profile and emotions management skills among ketamine users, and their emotional management skills as related to emotional health and lifestyle issues.

Methodology

We administered a battery of standardized assessments, including the Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MoCA), Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS), FANTASTIC checklist (of lifestyle) and Assessing Emotions Scale (C-AES; measure of emotions management skills) to 91 young persons (M = 26.9 years old, SD = 3.9) who abused ketamine and were just admitted to a 5-day in-patient Crisis Accommodation Programme of North District Hospital. They completed the assessments either by self-administration or through interview by research assistants.

Result

Based on the MoCA scores, more than half (56.2%) of the participants had mild to severe cognitive impairment, and there were large variations in the performance among them. Among the four aspects of emotion management skills measured by the C-AES, participants had significantly lower emotional regulation skills, and higher scores in the experience of stress, anxiety and depression than norm groups. Lower emotional regulation skills of the participants were significantly related to more stress ($r = -.46, p < .001$), more anxiety ($r = -.44, p < .001$) and depression ($r = .50, p < .001$).

All four aspects of emotions management, including appraisal of emotions ($r = .27, p < .05$), facilitation of thought ($r = .27, p < .05$), regulation of emotion ($r = .57, p < .001$), and facilitating relationship ($r = .30, p < .01$) were significantly linked to lifestyle issues. The results suggested that around half of the young people who abuses ketamine had significant cognitive impairment. Regulation of emotion is a great challenge to the participants, which is closely linked to their experience of stress, anxiety, depression, as well as lifestyle practices. Cognitive training and emotion management programmes could be the key focus of early intervention for young people who abuses ketamine. Therapists could also try to improve the motivation for change of clients by presenting the cognitive profile to clients and conducting brief motivational interviewing with them.