

PREVALENCE OF ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE USE IN HIV/HCV CO-INFECTED PATIENTS RECEIVING ANTIRETROVIRALS

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Background: Biological and behavioral synergistic effects associated with substance and alcohol use in patients living with HIV/HCV co-infection markedly increases morbidity and mortality, including patients receiving antiretroviral therapy. Following clinical guidelines, clinicians routinely recommend patients living with HIV/HCV co-infection to cease substance use and any level of alcohol use. Using a sample of HIV/HCV co-infected patients who were in routine clinical care receiving antiretroviral therapy, the objectives of this study were to estimate the prevalence of alcohol use and substance use and to compare clinical characteristics of those with and without alcohol and substance use.

Methods: This study recruited a sample of HIV/HCV co-infected patients receiving antiretroviral therapy (n=137) at a university affiliated HIV Clinic between January 2013 and July 2017. Chi-square and the Student's t-test were used to compare HIV/HCV co-infected patients with and without substance and alcohol use.

Results: The prevalence of alcohol use during antiretroviral therapy was 68%. Compared to those without alcohol use, those with alcohol use were more likely to be non-adherent to antiretroviral therapy (61% vs. 93%, $p = 0.000$). The prevalence of substance use during antiretroviral therapy was 31%. Compared to those without substance use, those with substance use had lower levels of quality of life (0.78 ± 0.18 vs. 0.72 ± 0.17 , $p=0.031$).

Conclusions: Unexpectedly, a significant number of patients who used alcohol did not have alcohol dependency. The findings highlight a need for clinicians to not overlook HIV/HCV co-infected patients who are without alcohol use disorders. The findings also suggest an urgent need for behavioral and pharmacologic interventions in HIV clinical settings to help HIV/HCV co-infected patients achieve reduction and abstinence from alcohol and substance use.

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