

A systematic review and meta-analysis of eating disorder prevalence among women in treatment for substance use

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Introduction and Aims: Comorbid eating disorders (EDs)/disordered eating behaviours (DEB) and substance use disorders (SUDs) are common. There is an increased risk of suicide ideation, and poor treatment outcomes. Most literature has explored substance use in those initially diagnosed with an ED with few studies on the prevalence of EDs in women initially diagnosed with a SUD who are attending treatment. Focusing on clinical settings is important because individuals who present for treatment at SUD residential centres with ED issues require tailored treatment approaches that can differ to others. This study systematically reviews and analyses ED and DEB rates of women in treatment for SUD.

Method / Approach: Databases were searched for studies published prior to and including 2020. Only studies where participants were in residential treatment for substance use issues were included. Studies where participants were in treatment for EDs only were excluded.

Results: There were 131 studies assessed for eligibility and 24 studies included in the final synthesis. The pooled proportion of individuals with an SUD and a diagnosed ED was 17.0%. It was 12% for bulimia nervosa and 6% for anorexia nervosa. DEB were higher at 37% and ED and/or DEB was 31%.

Discussions and Conclusions: EDs/DEBs are present in about one-third of women presenting for treatment for SUD. This meta-analysis contributes to the awareness that ED/DEB comorbidity is often present in women attending treatment for SUD. Given the clinical importance and challenges of concurrent treatment approaches, further study interventions and research on this comorbidity are needed.

Conflict of interest: None to disclose.