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THE EFFECTS OF PARENTAL ALCOHOLISM AND CHILDHOOD CONDUCT DISORDER SYMPTOMS ON EARLY-, MIDDLE-, AND LATE-ADOLESCENCE-ONSET ALCOHOLISM IN YOUNG ADULTS


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Methods

Study subjects. Data were drawn from the COGA project (Begleiter et al., 1995; a multicenter, multigenerational family study being conducted at university centers across the US. The major purpose of the study is to assess genetic influences on the development of alcohol abuse and dependence. Index cases were ascertained from either an outpatient chemical dependency treatment facilities and they and their family members were interviewed with a comprehensive psychiatric assessment instrument. The COGA sample also includes a comparison sample ascertained from a variety of sources without respect to any psychiatric disorder (including alcoholism) in any family member.

Assessment and Diagnosis

- The sample consisted of individuals aged 19 to 30 years of age who were interviewed using the Structured Assessment for the Genetics of Alcoholism (SASGA; Bucholz et al., 1994). The SASGA is designed to identify a broad range of psychiatric diagnoses using multiple criteria. The SASGA also assesses physical and social manifestations of alcoholism and related disorders. Clinician review of interviews, family history information, and medical records (if demonstrated) helped validate the diagnosis of the diagnosis of alcohol dependence in adults (Nurnberger et al., 2001). All diagnoses were utilized by computerized algorithms.

- Alcohol Dependence

The sample was divided into four groups based on their age at onset of DSM-III-R alcohol dependence:
- The early-onset group (EO) developed alcoholism at age 15 or before;
- The middle-onset group (MOA) developed alcoholism between ages 16 and 18;
- The late-onset group (LA) developed alcoholism after the ages of 19 and 24; and,
- The remaining subjects did not develop alcoholism by age 25 and served as the reference group (NO ALC).

- Conduct Disorder Symptoms

The symptoms for CD are used to assess DSM-III-R criterion B for ASP. Eleven of the 12 symptoms had a prevalence rate greater than 1% and were chosen for analysis. For these analyses, the symptoms were divided into two categories: early-onset (ages 13 to 14 years) or late-onset (ages 15 to 18 years). The ages at onset reported in the direct interview were used to determine the temporal relation with alcohol dependence.

Statistical Analysis

The effects of parental alcoholism and antecedent CD symptoms on alcohol dependence group membership were examined using multivariate logistic regression. Familial clustering in the data was accounted for using robust variance estimates (Hamilton, 2004).