

What Are Dual Disorders?

- Co-occurrence (co-morbidity) of two conditions: substance use disorders and psychiatric disorders.
- Both of these conditions must have some clinical significance to the affected—that is, they must both be associated with some impairment of functioning.
- Each disorder can lead to the other, or they can arise simultaneously. Recent Scientific Articles on this Topic:

Co-occurring severe mental illness and substance use disorders: a review of recent research.

RachBeisel J, Scott J, Dixon L, Psychiatry Serv. 1999 Nov. 50(11):1427-34

OBJECTIVE: Understanding the complex diagnostic and treatment issues posed by the co-occurrence of severe mental illness and substance use disorders has become a necessary exercise in current psychiatric practice. The authors reviewed research studies from the past six years that have contributed to our knowledge about effective assessment, diagnosis, course of illness, and treatment approaches. Research on special populations, including women, persons infected with HIV, and violent patients, is highlighted.

METHODS: PsycINFO, Silver Platter, and MEDLINE were used to search for English-language studies published in the United States and other countries. To augment the search, selected bibliographies were reviewed with a focus on clinical standards. Information was sought on epidemiology, screening and assessment strategies, course of illness, models of treatment delivery, and cost of care.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS: Although estimates of the prevalence of substance use disorders vary by population, a higher prevalence among persons with severe mental illness has been confirmed. Routine screening for and assessment of substance use disorders among persons with severe mental illness has become the accepted standard of care. The course of severe mental illness is negatively influenced by a substance use disorder, and an integrated approach to the treatment of both disorders is generally accepted to be the most promising treatment strategy. Components of this strategy include harm reduction, treatment in stages, motivational interviewing, cognitive-behavioral interventions, and modified 12-step self-help groups.

A review of co-morbidity: major mental illness and problematic substance use. Siegfried N,

Aust N Z J Psychiatry 1998 Oct. 32(5):707-17

OBJECTIVE: The aim of this paper is to critically review the literature on major mental illness and problematic substance use in order to provide clinicians and policy-makers with evidence to support proposed directions for management of the above.

METHOD: The available literature was accessed using computerized databases and manual searching.

RESULTS: The predominantly North American-based literature is largely descriptive. Those studies which attempt empirical evaluation are limited by methodological weaknesses which include small sample sizes, short follow-up periods, inadequate measurement of substance use, lack of experimental design, and treatment drift over time. However, there is consensus among most studies regarding prevalence rates and treatment. **CONCLUSIONS:** Problematic substance use is the most common co-morbid condition among people with a major mental illness and is associated with poorer patient outcomes. There is evidence to suggest that the integration of mental health and drug and alcohol services will result in improved detection, assessment and management of co-morbidity. Integration refers to the provision of comprehensive services by a single service with staff who are competent in both mental health and drug and alcohol skills. A tolerant, non-confrontational approach to substance use is most appropriate for people with a major mental illness. Treatment programs need to recognize the longitudinal nature of substance abuse and dependence. More research needs to be conducted in this field in order to establish guidelines for effective management.