Opioid Use May Affect Treatment for Alcohol Dependence

Release Date:
Wednesday, June 6, 2018 12:01 am EDT

Terms:
Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research  Wiley Research Headlines  Health Sciences

Dateline City:
Hoboken, NJ

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New research indicates that opioid misuse and the use of cannabis and other drugs may compromise the effectiveness of treatments for alcohol use disorder.

New research indicates that opioid misuse and the use of cannabis and other drugs may compromise the effectiveness of treatments for alcohol use disorder. In an Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research study, individuals with alcohol dependence who misused opioids and those who used cannabis and other drugs were more likely to drink heavily and frequently during and following treatment.

On average, individuals with opioid misuse engaged in heavy drinking 48 days earlier in treatment, drank heavily on approximately 8% and 13% more days in the last month of treatment and one year following treatment, respectively, and consumed 4 more drinks per peak drinking occasion than individuals without opioid misuse and no other drug use.

“This study provides evidence that we cannot ignore alcohol and other drug use when discussing potential impacts of the opioid epidemic,” said lead author Dr. Katie Witkiewitz, of the University of New Mexico. Individuals who misuse opioids have poorer outcomes in multiple domains, and the current study identified a much higher risk of alcohol relapse among those with opioid misuse in alcohol treatment.”

Additional Information

About Journal
Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research was founded by the National Council on Alcoholism (now the NCADD). Alcoholism and alcohol abuse cause significant social and medical harm, and research into the etiology and consequences of alcohol use is essential to guide prevention, treatment and policy. Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research gives readers direct access to the most significant and current research findings on the nature and management of alcoholism and alcohol-related disorders. Each month this journal brings basic science researchers and health care professionals the latest clinical studies and research findings on alcoholism, alcohol-induced syndromes and organ damage. The journal includes categories of basic science, clinical research, and treatment methods.

Language:
English