

Cardiovascular disease risk factors and symptoms among regular psychostimulant users

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to determine the prevalence of risk factors and possible symptoms of cardiovascular disease among regular psychostimulant users.
Design and Methods: A total of 239 regular psychostimulant users were administered a structured interview on health and cardiovascular disease symptoms.
Results: Thirty per cent had a family history of cardiovascular disease, 37% had sought treatment for possible symptoms of cardiovascular disease and 14% had been prescribed medications for symptoms of possible cardiovascular problems. The most commonly reported severe symptoms were: chronic shortness of breath (17%), chest pains (15%), palpitations (14%), chronic fatigue (13%) and dizziness/loss of consciousness (11%). Chest pains had been experienced on at least a weekly basis in the past 12 months by 13%. All symptoms occurred at significantly higher levels after the initiation of psychostimulant use. Higher levels of psychostimulant dependence were positively correlated with the number of frequently occurring symptoms ($r = 0.23$). Independent correlates of higher levels of frequently occurring symptoms were higher level of psychostimulant dependence, higher levels of alcohol dependence, a family history of cardiovascular disease and a diagnosis of cardiovascular disease.
Discussion and Conclusions: While a great deal of clinical attention has been given to the sequelae of psychostimulant use, such as psychosis, the potential effects upon the cardiovascular systems of users are worthy of specific public health attention.

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