



ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Substance misuse and sexual function in adolescents with chronic diseases



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KEYWORDS

Alcoholism;
Tobacco;
Illicit drugs;
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Adolescent;
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Abstract

Objective: To evaluate alcohol/tobacco and/or illicit drug misuse in Chronic Diseases (CDs).

Methods: A cross-sectional study with 220 CDs adolescents and 110 healthy controls including: demographic/anthropometric data; puberty markers; modified questionnaire evaluating sexual function, alcohol/smoking/illicit drug misuse and bullying; and the physician-conducted CRAFFT (car/relax/alone/forget/friends/trouble) screen tool for substance abuse/dependence high risk.

Results: The frequencies of alcohol/tobacco and/or illicit drug use were similar in both groups (30% vs. 34%, $p=0.529$), likewise the frequencies of bullying (42% vs. 41%, $p=0.905$). Further analysis solely in CDs patients that used alcohol/tobacco/illicit drug versus those that did not use showed that the median current age [15 (11–18) vs. 14 (10–18) years, $p<0.0001$] and education years [9 (5–14) vs. 8 (3–12) years, $p<0.0001$] were significant higher in substance use group. The frequencies of Tanner 5 ($p<0.0001$), menarche ($p<0.0001$) and spermarche ($p=0.001$) were also significantly higher in patients with CDs that used alcohol/tobacco/illicit, likewise sexual activity (23% vs. 3%, $p<0.0001$). A trend of a low frequency of drug therapy was observed in patients that used substances (70% vs. 82%, $p=0.051$). A positive correlation was observed between CRAFFT score and current age in CD patients ($p=0.005$, $r=+0.189$) and controls ($p=0.018$, $r=+0.226$).

Conclusions: A later age was evidenced in CDs patients that reported licit/illicit drug misuse. In CDs adolescent, substance use was more likely to have sexual intercourse. Our study reinforces that these patients should be systematically screened by pediatricians for drug related health behavioral patterns.

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PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Alcoolismo;
 Tabaco;
 Drogas ilícitas;
 Assédio moral;
 Adolescente;
 Doença crônica

Uso indevido de drogas e função sexual em adolescentes com doenças crônicas**Resumo**

Objetivo: Avaliar o uso indevido de álcool/tabaco e/ou de drogas ilícitas em Doenças Crônicas (DCs).

Métodos: Estudo transversal com 220 adolescentes com DCs e 110 controles saudáveis, incluindo: dados demográficos/antropométricos; marcadores de puberdade; questionário modificado de avaliação da função sexual, abuso de álcool/tabagismo/drogas ilícitas e assédio moral; e o uso do instrumento CRAFFT (car/relax/alone/forget/friends/trouble) pelo médico para o abuso/dependência de substâncias de alto risco.

Resultados: As frequências de uso de álcool/tabaco e/ou drogas ilícitas foram semelhantes em ambos os grupos (30% vs. 34%, $p=0,529$), assim como as frequências de assédio moral (42% vs. 41%, $p=0,905$). Uma análise mais aprofundada apenas em pacientes com DCs que usaram álcool/tabaco/droga ilícita versus aqueles que não usaram mostrou que a idade mediana atual [15 (11-18) vs. 14 (10-18) anos, $p<0,0001$] e anos de escolaridade [9 (5-14) vs. 8 (3-12) anos, $p<0,0001$] foram significativamente maiores no grupo que fazia uso das substâncias. As frequências de Tanner 5 ($p<0,0001$), menarca ($p<0,0001$) e espermarca ($p=0,001$) também foram significativamente maiores em pacientes com DCs que usaram álcool/tabaco/drogas ilícitas, assim como a atividade sexual (23% vs. 3%, $p<0,0001$). A tendência de baixa frequência de terapia com medicamentos foi observada em pacientes que usaram substâncias (70% vs. 82%, $p=0,051$). Observou-se uma correlação positiva entre o score no CRAFFT e idade atual em pacientes com DCs ($p=0,005$, $r=+0,189$) e controles ($p=0,018$, $r=+0,226$).

Conclusões: A idade mais avançada foi demonstrada em pacientes com DCs que relataram uso indevido de drogas lícitas/ilícitas. Em adolescente com DCs, o uso das substâncias resultou em maior propensão à prática de relações sexuais. Nosso estudo reforça que esses pacientes devem ser sistematicamente avaliados pelos pediatras em relação a padrões de comportamento de saúde relacionados com drogas.

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Introduction

Adolescence is a developmental stage characterized by biological and social changes.^{1,2} Risk patterns may begin in this period of life, including substance misuse (alcohol, tobacco and illicit drugs)¹ and high-risk sexual behaviors.³ Harmful phenomena of peer victimization, such as bullying, is also a relevant problem in healthy adolescents⁴ and in those with chronic diseases (CDs).⁵

Of note, the prevalence of chronic conditions has increased in pediatric population,⁶ and 10% of adolescents suffer from CDs.⁷ However, to our knowledge, misuse of substances evaluated by a screening tool,⁸ as well as assessment of bullying and sexual function, have not been simultaneously studied in an adolescent CDs population.

Therefore, the objectives of the present study were to evaluate alcohol, tobacco and/or illicit drug misuse in adolescent CDs patients and healthy controls. The possible associations between the substance misuse in CDs patients according to sexual function, bullying, demographic data, puberty markers, CDs groups and drug therapy use were also assessed.

Method

From February to December 2014, a cross-sectional study was carried out involving 220 consecutive outpatient adolescents (current age 10–19 years according to World Health

Organization criteria) with pediatric CDs. All of them were followed at the Adolescent Unit of our University Hospital and none of them had unwillingness to participate. The control group included 110 healthy adolescents (rate 2:1), without CDs, consecutively admitted to the outpatient clinic and referred from primary and secondary health care services to the Adolescent Unit of our University Hospital. This study was approved by the Local Ethics Committee of Hospital. All adolescents and their parents signed a consent/assent term.

This study included a modified questionnaire evaluating sexual function,⁹ alcohol/tobacco/illicit drug use and bullying was applied. The Portuguese CRAFFT (mnemonic acronym of car, relax, alone, forget, friends and trouble) screen (CRAFFT/CEASER) version was performed in both groups.^{3,8} Demographic/anthropometric data and puberty markers assessments were also evaluated.

A pilot study was carried out in 30 consecutive healthy and adolescents with CDs, who were tested and retested 1–2 months. The pre-test evaluated the subject comprehension of the questions, the consistency and coherence of the answers and the time taken to answer the questionnaire. The modified questionnaire included 14 questions with the option of answer “yes/no” or age/number of times about sexual function,⁹ bullying and alcohol/tobacco/illicit drugs use. Sexual function assessment included⁹: age at first sexual intercourse, sexual intercourse in the last month, use of male contraceptive (condom) in the first sexual activity, current use of oral and emergency contraceptive, knowledge

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