

THE LONG-TERM IMPACT OF POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD) ON RECOVERY FROM HEROIN DEPENDENCE

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Introduction and Aims: PTSD is highly prevalent among individuals with heroin dependence, yet few studies have examined its impact on long-term recovery. Using data collected as part of ATOS, this paper aims to examine the impact of PTSD on heroin use and other health outcomes over 18-20 years.

Design and Methods: 401 of the ATOS cohort were re-interviewed for the 18-20 year follow-up (65%). Lifetime and current DSM-IV diagnoses PTSD were obtained at study entry using the CIDI.

Results: Almost 40% of those reinterviewed at the 18-20 year were diagnosed with lifetime PTSD and 28% were experiencing current symptoms at baseline. Preliminary analyses indicate that there were no significant differences between those with and without PTSD in terms of heroin or other substance use at the 18-20-year follow-up. However, those who met criteria for PTSD at baseline were significantly less likely to be employed, more likely to have experienced subsequent trauma, and more likely to meet criteria for PTSD at 18-20 years.

Discussion and Conclusions: Consistent with research examining the short-term impact of PTSD on treatment outcomes for heroin dependence, the present study found that comorbid PTSD has a long-term impact on occupational functioning of individuals with heroin dependence and for a significant proportion PTSD is a chronic condition. These findings highlight the importance of addressing underlying comorbid presentations among this group.