

Screening for sexual addiction and ADHD in university students

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Introduction: This project is a part of a large collaborative research study being conducted at the University of Alberta titled: Genes Associated with Sexual Addiction and Related Conditions (also known as “AddGenes”) in conjunction with the American Foundation for Addiction Research and several stakeholders across the United States. The study aims to identify genetic markers associated with sexual addiction and related conditions and hence, contribute to elucidating their biological bases. Control recruitment consists of three phases: the first two are screening phases, one for addictions and related behaviours, the second for mental health status, with the final phase being genetic sampling. For this preliminary analysis, we looked at Phase 1.

Objectives:

1. To explore the prevalence of positive screening for sexual addiction and ADHD among university students
2. To explore the overlap in the above

Methods: For the greater collaborative study, University of Alberta students are being recruited as a control group to compare to a clinical sample receiving treatment for sexual addiction. To date, invitations to participate in the study have been sent by email to 48,000 students. Students who express interest begin a series of self-report screening questionnaires for addictive and related behaviours and conditions, including the 20-item Core Subscale of the Sexual Addiction Screening Test-Revised (SAST-R) (Carnes, Green & Carnes, 2010). Students who scored 6 or above on this dichotomous-scale questionnaire were classified as “screen positive”, and those below were “non-screen positive”; this cutoff has been previously shown to have a sensitivity of 81.7% and a specificity of 77.8% for classification of cases of clinical sexual addiction in men, and a sensitivity of 73.7% and a specificity of 79.2% to classify women cases (Carnes et al., 2010). Students were also given the ADHD Adult Self-Report Scale V1.1 (ASRS V1.1). This 18-item self-reporting tool screens for ADHD using a score of at least 4 (sensitivity 68.7%, specificity 99.5%; Kessler et al., 2005).

Results: From 48,000 email invitations, we received interest from 1,375 students, with 1,011 participants to date completing the first screening phase, and 990 being included in our analysis of anonymized encoded data with SAST-R and ASRS V1.1 scores. A total of 105 participants (10.61% of the overall sample) screened positive on the SAST-R Core Scale. Similarly, 193 participants in total (19.49%) screened positive on the ASRS V1.1.

The percentage screening positive on the ASRS V1.1 was 36.19% in those screening positive on the SAST-R, compared to 17.51% in those screening negative on the SAST-R. A Pearson Chi-Square test showed that this between-group difference was significant, $X^2(df = 1, N = 990) = 20.86, p < 0.001$.

Conclusion: Our findings indicate that students screening positive on the SAST-R are twice as likely to screen positive for ADHD than students who do not screen positive on the SAST-R. Although both SAST-R and ASRS V1.1 are screening tools and not diagnostic assessment instruments, these preliminary findings indicate that there may be substantial overlap between the relevant clinical phenotypes.

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References:

Carnes, P., Green, B. & Carnes, S. (2010). *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity*, 17: 7–30.
Kessler et al. (2005). *Psychological Medicine*, 35: 245–256.

Relevance: This work showcases a piece of latest research in the area of addiction, and may point to gaps/ need for relevant service considerations and development.

For: Oral or poster presentation