



Characterising minors admitted to treatment for cannabis in Catalonia and estimating mental disorders comorbidity



Regina Muñoz¹, Xavier Majó¹, Ariadna Angulo-Brunet^{1, 2} and Joan Colom¹

¹Programme on Substance Abuse. Public Health Agency of Catalonia. Autonomous Government of Catalonia

²Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Background

Cannabis use among youth under 18¹ and people admitted to treatment has increased the last 10 years².

Underage people with problematic cannabis use might have more complex health and social needs.

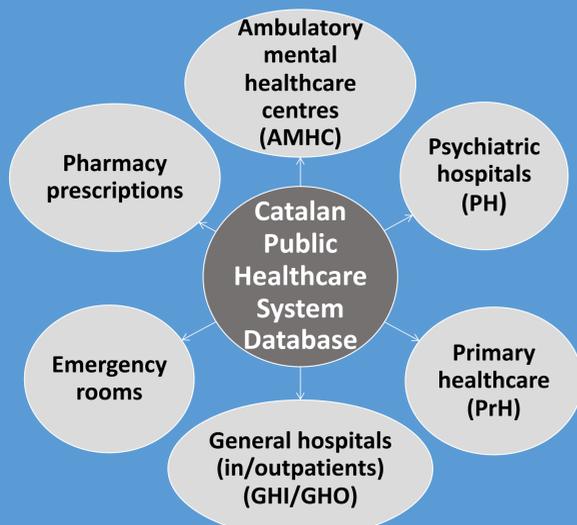
AIMS

- To analyse the basic sociodemographic characteristics of underage people admitted to treatment for cannabis use in drug care centres in Catalonia.
- To estimate the prevalence of mental health comorbidity among them.

Method

We analysed the questionnaire of admission to treatment³ of the 834 underage patients who started treatment at drug centres in Catalonia between 2015 and 2017. This questionnaire is based on the EMCDDA Admission to treatment key indicator⁴ and collects sociodemographic data, patterns of drug use and comorbid infections.

In parallel we searched for mental health disorder diagnosis of these patients in the Catalan Public Healthcare System Database which registers data from the different inpatient and outpatient public health centres in Catalonia (minimum basic data sets).



Conclusion and recommendations

Although fewer underage girls than boys use cannabis, girls are younger, start using drugs earlier and are more polydrug users than men, which means that prevention efforts have to take into consideration these gender specificities.

Among underage people admitted to treatment for their cannabis use there is a high prevalence of mental health disorders, almost a quarter of them had been diagnosed before starting to use cannabis. Therefore underage people either using cannabis or being diagnosed by a mental health disorder should be assessed for both conditions

References

- Enquesta sobre l'ús de drogues a l'ensenyament secundari a Espanya (ESTUDES) 2016 http://drogues.gencat.cat/web/.content/minisite/drogues/professionals/epidemiologia/2016/INFORME-ESTUDES-2016_DEFINITIU_format-DS.pdf
- Informe 2018 Sistema d'Informació sobre Drogodependències de Catalunya http://drogues.gencat.cat/web/.content/minisite/drogues/professionals/epidemiologia/docs/Informe_2018_SIDC_ok.pdf
- Notificació d'inici de tractament ambulatori per a Drogodependències http://drogues.gencat.cat/web/.content/minisite/drogues/professionals/epidemiologia/docs/Inicis_tractament_ambulatori_2018.pdf
- Treatment demand indicator (TDI) standard protocol 3.0 <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/manuals/tdi-protocol-3.0>

Results

1. Sociodemographic characteristics

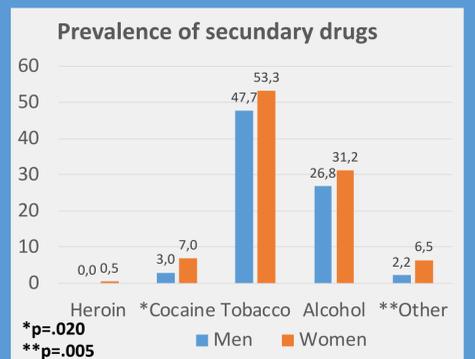
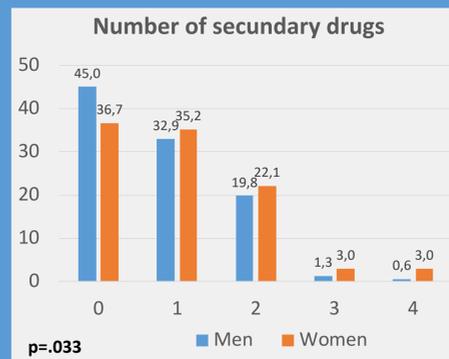
23.9% were women with a mean age of 16.5 [SD: 1.1] at treatment admission. Women were younger than men (16.2 [SD: 1.2] vs 16.6 [SD: 1.1] y-o, $p < .001$).

Age at admission to treatment		
Age	Men N=635	Women N=199
12	4 (0.6%)	1 (0.5%)
13	10 (1.6%)	9 (4.5%)
14	38 (6.0%)	22 (11.1%)
15	122 (19.2%)	55 (27.6%)
16	203 (32.0%)	55 (27.6%)
17	258 (40.6%)	57 (28.6%)
Mean	16.6 (1.1)	16.2 (1.2)

Compared to men, a higher percentage of women (15.7% vs 10.0%) were referred to treatment from hospital and other health units while men had a higher percentage of referrals from police or criminal justice (36.3% vs 20.7%).

Women were more polydrug users than men ($p = .033$).

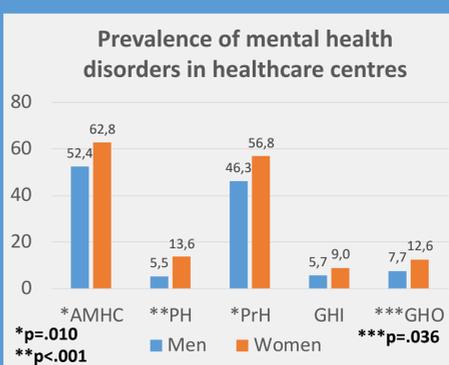
$p < .001$



The mean age of first drug consumption was lower in women (13.9 [SD: 1.4] vs 14.4 [SD: 1.5], $p < .001$).

2. Prevalence of mental health comorbidity

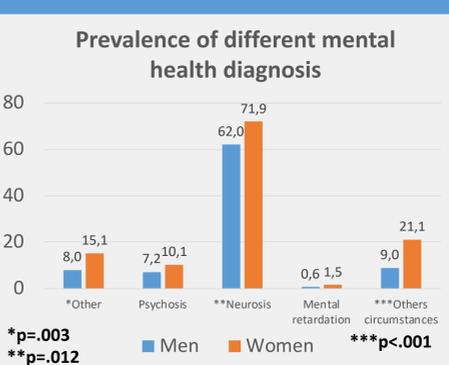
Mental health comorbidities were found in 69.2% (66.9% men vs 76.4%, $p = .012$). 20.4% of them (15.7% men vs 35.2% women, $p < .001$) had ever been in emergency rooms for mental health events.



Number of centres where they have been diagnosed		
Number of centres	Men N=635	Women N=199
0	210 (33.1%)	47 (23.6%)
1	188 (29.6%)	52 (26.1%)
2	169 (26.6%)	59 (29.6%)
3	54 (8.5%)	28 (14.1%)
4	11 (1.7%)	11 (5.5%)
5	3 (0.5%)	2 (1.0%)

$p = .002$

23.4% of them (25.0% men vs 18.1% women, $p = .043$) had a diagnosis of mental health disease before the onset of cannabis use and 15.0% (17.5% men vs 7.0% women, $p < .001$) were already on psychiatric medication. Overall 49.6% (47.6% men vs 56.3% women, $p = .032$) had ever been treated with psychiatric medication for their mental health disorder.



Number of different mental health diagnosis		
Number of diagnosis	Men N=635	Women N=199
0	218 (34.3%)	50 (25.1%)
1	307 (48.3%)	91 (45.7%)
2	81 (12.8%)	33 (16.6%)
3	27 (4.3%)	16 (8.0%)
4	1 (0.2%)	9 (4.5%)
5	1 (0.2%)	0 (0.0%)

$P < .001$