

# Substance-Induced Anxiety Disorder In Opioid Dependents

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## Abstract

This study was to evaluate the rate of current substance-induced anxiety disorder in opioid dependents. It was designed to determine the prevalence of DSM-IV-based substance-induced anxiety disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, and substance-induced depression. The settings were private and government clinics. Five hundred unpaid opioid dependents who voluntarily sought treatment participated in the study. We utilized the research version of the structured clinical interview for DSM-IV Axis I Disorders (SCID-I). The mean age of the subjects (487 men and 13 women) was 33.4 years, ranging from 16 to 67. The majority (341, 68.2%) had voluntary jobs or were self-employed, and 67 (13.4%) were unemployed. The majority (299, 59.8%) had education at the level of primary, secondary, or high school, and only 19 (3.8%) were illiterate. Of the subjects, 105 (21%) had substance-induced anxiety disorder, 11 (2.2%) had generalized anxiety disorder, and 274 (54.8%) had substance-induced depression. Of the subjects 319 (63.8%) reported more than 5 years use of opioid. Of the patients, only 16 (3.2%) reported no episode of abstinence, and the majority (484, 96.8%) reported one or more episodes of abstinence. About 4.2% (21) reported less than 1 g per day, and the majority (86.4%, 432) reported between 1 to 5 g per day current use of opioids.

**Key Words:** substance-induced anxiety disorder, opioid dependent, Iran

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Many studies have shown a strong association between substance dependence and other psychiatric disorders, especially anxiety disorders and mood disorders.<sup>1,2</sup> Substance-dependent patients have high rates of depression,<sup>2-4</sup> minor psychopathology,<sup>5,6</sup> and personality disorders.<sup>7-9</sup> The results of a research study showed that success or failure in detoxification treatment of opioid-dependent outpatients was best predicted by initial psychiatric symptoms.<sup>10</sup> Research evidence

showed that coexisting psychiatric disorders, especially anxiety disorders and mood disorders, can interfere with the course and treatment of substance dependence; the research also showed that opioid dependents with a depressed mood at the beginning of treatment were less likely to be abstinent at follow-up than other opioid dependents with a normal mood.<sup>11</sup>

As many other countries, in Iran substance use disorders has become a big problem. Iranian drug policy states that substance abuse and dependence are viewed as criminal behaviors and according to this Act, a large number of opioid dependents are currently imprisoned. It should be noted that in Iran illegal substances are alcohol, opioids, cannabis, cocaine, LSD, amphetamines, and other hallucinogens. Those substance dependents who seek treatment voluntarily are not arrested and can be treated.

Very little is known about the rate of anxiety disorders in opioid dependents in Iran; therefore, it is of interest to assess the current rate of anxiety disorders among opioid dependents in the Iranian population.

## MATERIALS AND METHOD

### Subjects

The data were gathered from 500 consecutive opioid dependents, using DSM-IV criteria for opioid dependence,<sup>12,13</sup> from private and government clinics (for treatment-seeking opioid dependents) in Shiraz city (the capital of the Fars Province, with a population of over 1.5 million) in 2001. They were told about informed consent and were assured that all data provided were

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strictly confidential. The patients were using opioids at least for 12 months duration.

### Procedure

The patients were interviewed 3 days after standard detoxification treatment of 7 days. All interviewees were opioid-free for 3 days before the interview was made. The interview was conducted by a board-certified psychiatrist using the DSM-IV criteria for anxiety disorders and mood disorders.<sup>12,13</sup>

## RESULTS

The data were gathered from 500 (487 men and 13 women) unpaid opioid-dependent patients whose mean age was 33.37, ranging from 16 to 67 years with *SD* of 10.09. Of the subjects, 350 (70%) were married, 148 (29.6%) single, 1 (0.2%) divorced, and 1 (0.2%) separated.

Table 1 shows age distribution, Table 2 gives occupational status, Table 3 shows educational status, and Table 4 summarizes frequency distribution of anxiety disorders in opioid-dependent patients. As Table 4 shows, 105 (21%) had substance-induced anxiety disorder, 11 (2.2%) had generalized anxiety disorder, and the majority, 274 (54.8%), reported having substance-induced depression.

Of the patients, 319 (63.8%) reported more than 5 years and 181 (36.2%) reported between 1 to 5 years current use of opioids.

The majority, 432 (86.4%), reported between 1 to 5 g per day, 47 (9.4%) reported more than 5 g per day, and only 21 (4.2%) reported less than 1 g per day current use of opioids.

**TABLE 1.** Frequency Distribution of Opioid Dependents by Age (*N* = 500)

Age Group	<i>N</i>	%	Mean Age	<i>SD</i>
>20	8	1.6	17.63	0.74
20-29	205	41	24.92	2.72
30-39	156	31.2	33.74	3.11
40-49	93	18.6	43.38	2.82
>50	38	7.6	56.29	5.68
Total	500	100	33.37	10.09

**TABLE 2.** Frequency Distribution of the Opioid Dependents by Occupational Status (*N* = 500)

Status	<i>N</i>	%
University students	1	0.2
Housewife	11	2.2
Soldier	3	0.6
Factory-worker	8	1.6
Farm-worker	5	1
Employee	49	9.8
Retired	15	3
Unemployed	67	13.4
Self-employed (Voluntary job)	341	68.2
Total	500	100

Only 16 (3.2%) reported no episode of abstinence, and the majority, 484 (96.8%), reported one or more episodes of abstinence.

## DISCUSSION

In Iran the majority of opioid-dependent patients never reveal their condition, and only a small part of them seeks treatment or any other psychiatric help voluntarily; therefore, the participants of the current research are not representative of the opioid dependents in Iran. In this study, 105 (21%) of the subjects were diagnosed as having substance-induced anxiety disorder, 11 (2.2) generalized anxiety disorder, and 274 (54.8%) substance induced-depression.

The high rates of depression and anxiety disorder in this research suggest that opioid dependents with anxiety disorder or depression are highly motivated to seek treatment and are more likely to be identified and receive treatment. Moreover, the opioid-dependent patients have been shown to be at high risk for major depression and anxiety disorders.<sup>14</sup>

**TABLE 3.** Frequency Distribution of Opioid Dependents by Educational Status

Education	<i>N</i>	%
Illiterate	19	3.8
Elementary school	182	36.4
Secondary or high school	117	23.4
Diploma Holder	139	27.8
Higher Education	43	8.6
Total	500	100

**TABLE 4.** Frequency Distribution of Opioid Dependents by Current Anxiety Disorder and Depression

Anxiety Disorder/Depression	N	%
Substance-induced anxiety disorder	105	21
Generalized anxiety disorder	11	2.2
Substance-induced depression	274	54.8
Total	336	67.2

Many studies, as the current research, showed high rates of psychiatric disorders, especially anxiety disorders and depression in opioid dependents.<sup>15-17</sup> Because of high rates of psychiatric disorders in opioid-dependent patients, psychiatric services should be open and accessible to the patients, especially those who voluntarily seek help and treatment.

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