

Co-consumption of Ethanol and Medical Psychotropics in European Countries: Insights from a Three-year Retrospective Study of Forensic Samples in Spain

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Abstract

The co-consumption of ethanol (alcohol) and medical psychotropics presents significant public health concerns due to the compounded effects on cognitive and motor functions, potentially leading to increased risk of accidents and adverse health outcomes. A recent retrospective study conducted over three years in Spain provides insights into the prevalence and patterns of such co-consumption based on forensic samples. This review aims to summarize the key findings of this study and contextualize them within the broader European landscape.

Keywords: Ethanol • Medical psychotropics • Forensic samples

Introduction

The study analyzed forensic samples collected in Spain from 2018 to 2020, focusing on cases where both ethanol and psychotropic medications were detected. The primary objective was to identify trends in co-consumption and potential implications for public health and safety. Prevalence of Co-Consumption: The study found that a significant proportion of forensic samples contained both ethanol and one or more psychotropic substances. This co-consumption was more prevalent among middle-aged adults, with a notable incidence in individuals involved in traffic accidents and other accidental deaths. Benzodiazepines were the most commonly detected psychotropic drugs, followed by antidepressants and antipsychotics.

Literature Review

The combination of these medications with ethanol can amplify their sedative effects, leading to severe impairment. There were distinct gender and age differences in co-consumption patterns. Men were more likely to have higher levels of ethanol, while women showed a higher prevalence of psychotropic drug use. The age group most affected ranged from 35 to 50 years. The study highlighted regional differences within Spain, with certain areas showing higher rates of co-consumption. These variations may be attributed to differences in healthcare practices, prescription patterns, and cultural attitudes towards alcohol and medication use [1].

Discussion

The co-consumption of ethanol and psychotropic medications poses significant challenges for public health authorities. The synergistic effects of these substances can lead to heightened risks of accidents, overdoses, and long-term health issues. The findings underscore the need for targeted public health interventions, including:

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Increasing public awareness about the risks associated with combining alcohol and psychotropic medications is crucial. This includes educating both healthcare professionals and patients [2].

Implementing stricter guidelines for prescribing psychotropic medications, especially to individuals with known alcohol use disorders, can help mitigate risks [3].

Improving the monitoring of prescription practices and reporting of adverse events related to co-consumption can aid in developing more effective prevention strategies [4].

While the study focuses on Spain, the issue of ethanol and psychotropic drug co-consumption is prevalent across Europe. Similar trends have been observed in other countries, with varying degrees of prevalence and associated risks. The findings from Spain can serve as a reference point for comparative studies and collaborative efforts to address this issue at a broader European level [5,6].

Conclusion

The three-year retrospective study of forensic samples in Spain provides valuable insights into the co-consumption of ethanol and medical psychotropics. The high prevalence and associated risks call for urgent public health measures to address this growing concern. By understanding the patterns and implications of such co-consumption, authorities can develop more effective strategies to improve safety and health outcomes across Europe. Further research is needed to explore the underlying causes of co-consumption, the effectiveness of interventions, and the long-term health outcomes for affected individuals. Additionally, cross-country studies within Europe can help identify best practices and foster collaborative efforts to combat this public health issue.

Acknowledgement

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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