Personality Dimensions and Psychiatric Treatment of Alcoholics’ Wives

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Aim. To investigate the basic personality dimensions of the wives of alcoholics in comparison to the wives of non-alcoholics, and to compare these two groups according to psychiatric treatment frequency.

Method. The group of alcoholics’ wives (N=100) was compared to a group of non-alcoholics' wives (N=90). The groups were identical with respect to their age, working and marital status. Eysenck Personality Questionnaire was used for measuring the main personality dimensions. A structured psychiatric interview based on ICD-10 and DSM-III-R, and self-assessment of behavior before marriage (extraverted vs. introverted) were also used.

Results. The wives of alcoholics were less extraverted than the wives of non-alcoholics. There were no differences in neuroticism and psychoticism. According to the self-assessment of their behavior before marriage, wives of alcoholics also manifested less extraverted behavior before marriage. The wives of alcoholics were psychiatrically treated more often during their marriage than the wives of non-alcoholics. Moreover, the group of the wives of non-alcoholics had fewer psychiatric treatments during than before marriage.

Conclusion. The wives of alcoholics were less extraverted than the wives of non-alcoholics, but they did not differ in two other main personality dimensions, neuroticism and psychoticism. More psychiatric treatments during marriage of the wives of alcoholics can be interpreted in accordance with the “stressed wife” theory.

Key words: alcoholism; female; marriage; personality inventory; questionnaires

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