Men More Likely Than Women To Misuse Prescription Opioids

BY ROBERT FINN
FROM ADDICTIVE BEHAVIORS

More men than women report nonmedical prescription opioid use, according to the results of a nationally representative survey of 55,279 individuals published online in Addictive Behaviors. Men were significantly more likely to endorse lifetime nonmedical use of prescription opioids (15.9% vs. 11.2%), and 5.9% of men and 4.2% of women reported past-year use (5.9% vs. 4.2%), according to the study. Participants were asked about social activities interfered with by opioid use, and more than 8% of men and more than 7% of women reported problems with work due to opioid use. Full-time employment was reported by 36% of the dysthymic patients, 44% of the major depression patients, and 52% of the general population.

The investigators assessed past-year prevalence of opioid abuse or dependence, and 13.2% met the criteria for current use, according to the results of a nationally representative survey of 55,279 individuals surveyed by NARSAC. Most of those surveyed were employed, and married.

Diagnosis of dysthymic disorder is not always easy. “It’s a big problem. When [patients] come to your office, they don’t say they have a lot of symptoms,” Dr. Stewart said. Even clinicians who go through a “laundry list for major depression” might miss it, he added, and as a result, some patients might be misdiagnosed as not depressed.

Dr. Stewart’s recommendation was simple: “I go for the mood myself. If you come into my office and say you’re depressed, by God, you are depressed.” An uncertain cause in a potential relationship is a possible limitation of the study. In other words, is the dysthymic disorder a cause or result of impairment? In addition, there could be an underlying vulnerability that causes people to experience both dysthymia and social impairment.

An earlier review article suggested that people with dysthymic disorder function much better when they are treated effectively (J. Psychiatr. Pract. 2001;7:298-309). “The other side of the coin is overtreatment, so you have to decide what is more important,” he said.