

Autism and Addiction: the forgotten dual disorders

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Objectives:

Despite substance use disorder (SUD) rates of up to 36% in autistic people very little is known of the underlying aetiology or effective ways of managing them in autistic people. Furthermore, in terms of increased Internet use, or other potential behavioural addictions (such as gambling) little has been done to differentiate the mechanisms and motivations for use in autistic people.

Materials and methods

We have convened a Priority Setting Partnership (PSP) bringing together all potential stakeholders including experts by experience to drive research, policy, and inform clinical practice in this important and under-represented group.

The aim is to identify and prioritise the evidence uncertainties and reach consensus on a final list (Top 10) of jointly agreed research and policy priorities in this area.

We have undertaken a structured scoping review to identify gaps, and will survey widely, via an online platform, requesting questions that people wish answered and an invitation to one of the virtual workshops and Delphi process

Results:

A structured scoping review yielded 694 initial results for alcohol use, 1359 for substance use, and 343 for behavioural addictions in autism. Of these publications, 26, 73, and 9 papers respectively met the inclusion criteria. Stakeholder engagement via an online survey and meetings offered 342 unique potential questions for prioritisation. Survey results were classified and reformulated into priorities for a Delphi process, to reach consensus on the top priorities for research, policy and clinical practice.

These priorities will be presented during the symposium with the aim of encouraging a collaborative cross disciplinary approach to tackling this important but marginalised area of addiction

Conflicts of interest:

I do not work with tobacco, alcohol, electronic cigarettes and gaming companies. This study is funded by the Society for the Study of Addiction <https://www.addiction-ssa.org/>

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