
**COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM OF PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC SUPPORT
OF COMBATANTS WITH ALCOHOL ADDICTION***Kozhyna H., Zelenska K., Lytvynenko V., Korovina L.***Kharkiv National Medical University, Kharkiv, Ukraine**<https://doi.org/10.35339/ic.9.2.kzl>**Abstract**

Introduction. The combatants develop anxious alertness, the perception of the environment as potentially dangerous, the impulsive response increases, and the personality structure is affected. All this leads to a change in behavior and, most often, to alcoholization of this demographic group.

Materials and methods. To achieve this goal, we examined 96 men who were treated in the psychiatry and narcology clinic of the Military Medical Clinical Center of the Northern Region. According to the diagnostic criteria of ICD-10, they suffered from alcohol dependence: 31.9% of respondents – alcohol abstinence, 22.6% – abstinence in conditions precluding use, 29.2% – constant use, 16.3% – occasional use. The treatment group (patients who took part in rehabilitation program) included 56 people. The control group consisted of 40 people who received standard treatment regulated in the hospital. The style of alcohol abuse with a high degree of reliability correlated with the issues of danger to physical, psychological and mental health. Dangerous alcohol consumption was found in 55.2% of the participants, a high probability of alcohol dependence was found in 44.8% of respondents.

Results. The clinical picture of alcohol dependence was characterized by loss of situational control, palimpsests, dysphoria, affective reactions, anxiety and depressive disorders and asthenic manifestations. Against the background of the use of the developed comprehensive program of psychotherapeutic support in 45.1% of the members of the main group and 32.6% of control group patients demonstrated coping strategies aimed at addressing the challenges; 31.4% and 22.4% of the treatment and control groups, respectively, demonstrated coping strategies aimed at emotions; in 15.9% and 32.6% of patients coping strategies were designed to avoid stress; in 6.7% and 12.4% in the above mentioned groups respectively – coping strategies aimed at the distraction.

Conclusions. As a result of the implementation of the comprehensive program of psychotherapeutic support for combatants with alcohol addiction, it is expected that the quality of medical care for combatants will improve.

Keywords: *psychotherapy, comprehensive treatment, combatants, alcoholism.*

INTRODUCTION

Improving the effectiveness of diagnosis, treatment, prevention, medical and social rehabilitation of patients with alcohol dependence is one of the significant issues of modern psychiatry and narcology [1]. The modern period of our country's development is characterized by a large number of destructive and socially determined stress factors. As a result, there is a significant increase in the long-term stress load under which people live in Ukraine [2; 3].

This creates a number of unfavorable factors for increasing level of psychoactive substance use, especially, alcohol [4]. Modern studies of alcohol addiction are devoted to updating the concept of psychological and social rehabilitation of patients, their social reintegration and improving their quality of life [5; 6]. As a result, the search for new psychotherapeutic approaches to the treatment of alcohol dependence and the development of effective schemes that meet modern standards of treatment is increasing [7].

Combatants are a special part of the population. They have always had special social and psychological consequences of participation in military conflicts. It is known that there are numerous factors of violations of adaptation of combatants in civilian life. These can be violations in the sphere

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of interpersonal relations (aggression, conflicts), or they can manifest themselves in deviant behavior. According to statistics, up to 50% of combatants exposed to combat stress suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) [8; 9].

The combatants develop anxious alertness, the perception of the environment as potentially dangerous, the impulsive response increases, and the personality structure is affected. All this leads to a change in behavior and, most often, to alcoholization of this demographic group [10; 11].

The aim of our research was to develop the comprehensive program of psychotherapeutic support for combatants with alcohol addiction.

Materials and methods

To achieve the goal, 96 men were examined, who were treated at the psychiatric and narcological departments of the Military Medical Clinical Center of the Northern Region. According to the diagnostic criteria of ICD-10, they suffered from alcohol dependence: 31.9% of respondents – alcohol abstinence, 22.6% – abstinence in conditions precluding use, 29.2% – constant use, 16.3 % – occasional use.

All patients received psychopharmacotherapy regulated in accordance with the standards of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine.

The main group (patients who took part in rehabilitation program) included 56 people. The control group consisted of 40 people who received standard treatment regulated in the hospital.

The following examination methods were used: anamnestic, clinical-psychopathological, psychodiagnostic and statistical.

Results and discussion

According to the results of the study, among the interviewed patients there was a predominance of people who constantly abused alcohol, the average score on the AUDIT test was 4.0, which indicated the presence of serious alcohol disturbances. Alcohol consumption style is highly reliably correlated with physical, psychological, and mental health hazards. Dangerous alcohol use was detected in 55.2% of subjects, a high probability of alcohol addiction – in 44.8% of respondents.

The clinical picture of alcohol addiction was characterized by a loss of situational control, palpitations, dysphoria, affective reactions, anxiety-depressive disorders and asthenic manifestations.

In 40.2% of the patients, intoxication dominated with dysphoric-explosive component, in 35.1% of patients had anxiety-depressive component; in 24.7% of patients was aggressive component of intoxication.

For the combatants, the main motive for alcohol abuse was to "relieve combat stress", "numb the pain", "get rid of important military memories", the desire to use alcohol to level negative emotional experiences (tension, anxiety, fear, sadness).

As the analysis of the severity of traumatic stress has shown, 31.4% of the patients have a complete manifestation of stress disorder, an obvious manifestation of 39.5%, and a partial manifestation of 29.1% of patients. The data obtained indicate an extremely high strength of combat stress as a risk factor for the development of an addiction syndrome in servicemen both at the time of exposure and in the future

The study of the styles of stress-overcoming behavior made it possible to ascertain the predominance of non-constructive forms of behavior in the surveyed combatants: in 51.4% of patients with alcohol dependence coping strategies were noted focused on avoidance, in 33.3% – on distraction, in 10.3% – on emotions, 5.0% – on solving problems. 67.5% of respondents demonstrated a very high level and 29.8% demonstrated elevated levels of social frustration.

Patients of the main group received complex treatment with the use of pharmacotherapy, psychotherapy and psychoeducation. Its main strategy is a comprehensive impact on the cognitive, emotional, psychological and physiological, behavioral and social features of alcohol addiction.

Pharmacotherapy was aimed at suppressing the pathological craving for alcohol, maintaining remission, and correcting emotional disorders.

The psychotherapeutic complex included the use of the program "12 steps. New life", trauma-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy, desensitization and processing of emotional trauma with eye movements, personality-oriented psychotherapy, art therapy and psychoeducation.

Trauma-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy is a short-term intervention designed to reduce symptoms associated with a traumatic event. It is aimed at working with negative emotions, physical reactions and any other difficulties associated with a traumatic experience.

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing therapy (EMDR) is aimed at alleviating the experiences caused by traumatic memories.

Person-centered psychotherapy is aimed at the patient's understanding of cause-and-effect relationships and the relationship between his personality and the disease, the formation of an adequate assessment of a psychotraumatic situation and

finding ways to overcome it. Drawing techniques aimed at harmonizing the emotional state and constructive actions taking into account the specifics of psycho-traumatic circumstances were used during the art therapy.

The main tasks in conducting mental and educational classes were filling the knowledge gaps related to narcology among the patients and their families; reducing levels of stigmatization and self-stigmatization in patients and their family members; teaching patients the skills of coping with the disease; correction of patients' social positions changed by alcohol dependence; counteracting the possibility of disease recurrence.

A comprehensive program of psychotherapeutic support included social skills training, stress resistance, learning skills to overcome acute stress because of the specificity of combat trauma.

Approbation of the proposed comprehensive program of psychotherapeutic support for combatants with alcohol addiction proved its high effectiveness. Analysis of clinical results of the developed system indicated that in the main group according to the AUDIT test 65.3% of respondents found alcohol consumption relatively safe (or stopped drinking alcohol completely), 23.1% considered alcohol consumption risky. Among the surveyed control group, 55.1% of the surveyed had dangerous alcohol consumption, and 25.8% had a high probability of alcohol dependence.

So, 77.6% of the surveyed in the treatment group formed a perception of their own dependent condition and understanding of the need for therapeutic work.

An analysis of the duration and quality of remission revealed (after 6 months): 70.1% of those surveyed in the main group showed complete remission of alcohol dependence compared to 41.5%

of patients in the control group; incomplete remission – in 26.2% and 49.1% of respondents in the main and the control groups respectively; persistent alcohol abuse – in 3.7% and 9.4% of the main and the control groups respectively.

Against the background of the use of the developed comprehensive program of psychotherapeutic support in 45.1% of the members of the main group and 32.6% of control group patients demonstrated coping strategies aimed at addressing the challenges; 31.4% and 22.4% of the treatment and control groups, respectively, demonstrated coping strategies aimed at emotions; in 15.9% and 32.6% of patients coping strategies were designed to avoid stress; in 6.7% and 12.4% in the above mentioned groups respectively – coping strategies aimed at the distraction.

Conclusions

As a result of the implementation of the comprehensive program of psychotherapeutic support for combatants with alcohol addiction, it is expected that the quality of medical care for combatants will improve.

DECLARATIONS:

Disclosure statement

The authors have no potential conflicts of interest to disclosure, including specific financial interests, relationships, and/or affiliations relevant to the subject matter or materials included.

Data Transparency

The data can be requested from the authors.

Statement of Ethics

The authors have no ethical conflicts to disclosure.

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Consent for publication

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