Preadolescence tobacco use and childhood socio-emotional-behavioral symptoms: analysis of a birth cohort study

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Introduction

Early initiation of substance use is associated with worse health outcomes and risky behaviours in adulthood, making substance use in adolescence a special public health topic. Research on childhood risk factors of preadolescence substance use is needed for early intervention and prevention.

The objective of the present study is to predict preadolescence lifetime tobacco use.

Methods

Data for this study was drawn from the longitudinal study Millenium Cohort Study, held in the UK, and following a sample of children since their infancy. Logistic regression analyses stratified by gender, including 9895 children, were performed to predict preadolescence alcohol use (age 11) with predictors collected at age 7, in an ecological framework.

Results

In the adjusted final model, boys who endorsed more hyperactivity symptoms (OR 1.09, 1.01 to 1.18), but not conduct problems (OR 1.10, 0.99 to 1.24) at age 7 were associated with greater odds of preadolescence smoking. Harsh parenting practices at age 7 were also associated with positive lifetime tobacco use age 11 years. In contrast with boys, girls with conduct problems had higher odds of positive lifetime smoking (OR 1.29, 1.13 to 1.47). Accordingly, higher prosocial skills were associated with lower odds of positive lifetime smoking (OR 0.83, 0.72 to 0.92).

Conclusions

Socio-emotional-behavioral symptoms are associated with preadolescence lifetime tobacco use with gender specific associations. Early screening and intervention, in an ecological perspective is essential to prevent early onset tobacco use.