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THE IMPACT OF CIGARETTE CONSUMPTION ON MENTAL HEALTH

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INTRODUCTION

There is a common misconception that smoking helps people control stress, being a form of “maintenance medication” in people with chronic anxiety. However, recurrent cigarette use triggers psychological pathophysiological mechanisms through neuroadaptation, which can cause severe symptoms of GAD (generalized anxiety disorder), MDD (major depressive disorder), in addition to nicotine withdrawal crises.

OBJECTIVES

This narrative review seeks to elucidate the association of smoking on mental health and the clinical picture resulting from abstinence from the nicotine present in cigarettes. Methodology: We searched for articles published in the bibliographic databases Medline, PsycINFO and Scielo, between April 2012 and January 2022. The descriptors used were “mental health” and “smoking”. The selected studies were based on investigating the mental health of adults before and after stopping cigarette use. Results: Primary and secondary results were listed throughout the research. Among the primary results, changes in symptoms of anxiety, depression and mixed symptoms (anxiety and depression) were observed. In the secondary results, positive changes were listed by the participants in terms of stress symptoms, improvements in physical and psychological quality of life, in addition to improvements in the quality of social life. From the quantitative point of view of symptoms, it was not possible to produce evidence of differences in the size of the positive effect of symptoms, generating methodological bias in the study. Another interesting data collected was the evidence that smoking cessation did not compromise the work activities of the participants, even if they had experienced withdrawal symptoms, such as headache, gastric upset, dizziness,

sleep disturbances and, in more severe cases, severe, change in concentration.

CONCLUSION

In view of the compilation of data collected, we see evidence that mental health does not worsen after quitting smoking and, even if there are invariably symptoms of cigarette withdrawal, such as intermittent headache, dizziness, sleep disturbances, etc., it is associated with improvements that range from small to moderate in mental health. From this perspective, we found considerable support for encouraging and supporting smoking cessation in patients, in order to clarify the beneficial and harmful factors of smoking on the physical and psychological quality of life, as well as at the individual and collective level.