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EXECUTIVE AND PERSONALITY FUNCTIONING AND THE ABILITY TO MAINTAIN PROLONGED ABSTINENCE IN ALCOHOL DEPENDENCE

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Introduction: Recent studies have revealed that neurocognitive and personality domains are important contributors of prolonged abstinence in alcohol dependence.

Objectives/aims: To reveal further factors related to the ability of maintaining prolonged abstinence in alcohol dependence. Therefore executive and personality functioning were compared of patients with short (STA) and long-term abstinence (LTA).

Methods: STA patients (N=44) were involved from an inpatient center, LTA patients (N=46; min. 3 years of abstinence) were involved from AA Groups. Decision-making, inhibition and planning as components of executive functioning, coping strategy, temperament and character factors as indicators of personality functioning were evaluated. MANCOVA and Mann-Whitney U statistical analyses were applied to compare the two groups.

Results: No significant differences were found between the STA and LTA patients along decision-making ( $F=0.008$ ,  $p=0.992$ ), planning (Mann-Whitney  $U=794.5$ ,  $p=0.065$ ) and inhibition (Mann-Whitney  $U=921.5$ ,  $p=0.442$ ). Lower levels of novelty seeking and harm avoidance and higher levels of self-directedness and cooperativeness were found in the LTA group ( $F=3.32$ ,  $p=0.001$ ) along with lower level of emotion oriented coping ( $F=3.32$ ,  $p=0.001$ ).

Conclusions: Decision-making, inhibition and planning components of executive functioning are independent from the length of abstinence in alcohol dependence. The similar decision-making pattern of the two groups reflect the core feature of addictive behavior; preference toward immediate higher reward and lower punishment despite the long term negative consequences. It is hypothesized that the higher levels of adaptive personality factors in the LTA group decrease the risk of relapse, and contribute to the ability of maintaining prolonged abstinence.