

Perpetration of Intimate Partner Violence Among Men in Methadone Treatment Programs in New York City

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This study examined the prevalence of perpetration of intimate partner violence among 356 men recruited from methadone maintenance treatment programs. We used logistic regression with covariance adjustment to examine the associations between intimate partner violence and illicit drug use by the participants, their female partners, or both. We found a high prevalence of intimate partner violence among the men in our sample. Significant associations between intimate partner violence and illicit drug use varied by types of drugs and whether the female partner or both partners were using drugs. (*Am J Public Health*. 2007;97:1230–1232. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2006.090712)

Over the past 2 decades, accumulating research has found illicit drug use to be a key

risk factor for men perpetrating intimate partner violence against women.^{1–7} Research also has found strong associations between women's use of different illicit substances and experiencing intimate partner violence.^{8–10} Knowledge remains limited on how the relation between drug use and intimate partner violence varies according to whether the perpetrator, the victim, or both use illicit drugs. We addressed gaps in the knowledge base on the relation between illicit drug use by both partners in an intimate relationship and the perpetration of intimate partner violence.

METHODS

A random sample of 356 eligible men was recruited from methadone maintenance treatment programs in New York City. Eligible male participants had to meet the following requirements: be aged 18 years or older; have been enrolled in a methadone maintenance treatment program for at least 3 months; and during the past year, had a sexual relationship with a woman whom he described as his girlfriend, spouse, regular sexual partner, or mother of his children.¹¹

Physical, sexual, and injurious intimate partner violence during the past 6 months and lifetime were assessed with the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale.¹² *Sexual intimate partner violence* pertains to coercive acts intended to engage a partner in unwanted sexual activity, that range from verbal insistence (e.g., “Insisted on having sex when my partner did not want to but did not use physical force”) to physical force (e.g., used force [like hitting, holding down, or using a weapon] to make my partner have oral or anal sexual intercourse”). *Injurious intimate partner violence* refers to partner-inflicted violence that has caused physical injury. (An example question for minor injurious intimate partner violence is “My partner had a sprain, bruise, or small cut because of a fight with me,” and an example for severe injurious intimate partner violence is “My partner passed out from being hit on the head in a fight with me.”) Whereas injurious intimate violence refers to the consequences of partner-inflicted physical injury, physical intimate partner violence refers to the type of violent assault (e.g., slapping, pushing, kicking) perpetrated against the partner. Not

all physical IPV necessarily results in injuries. We defined *any form of intimate partner violence* (combining minor and severe subscales) and *any form of severe intimate partner violence* as at least 1 incidence of sexual, physical, or injurious intimate partner violence.

We used the Drug Use and Risk Behavior Questionnaire to measure participants' use of crack or cocaine, heroin, and marijuana in the past 6 months.¹³ We focused on these 3 illicit drugs because they were found to be associated with intimate partner violence in the literature.^{4,10} Participants also reported whether their female partners used these drugs over the past 6 months. *Polydrug use* was defined as use of at least 2 of the 3 illicit drugs. *Any illicit drug use* was defined as use of any of the 3 drugs. For each type of illicit drug use, we constructed a "couples' illicit drug use" variable with 4 attributes: (1) neither the participant nor his female partner used the drug, (2) only the male participant used the drug, (3) only the female partner used the drug, or (4) both the participant and his female partner used the drug.

We collected data on sociodemographic characteristics (age, years of schooling, income, ethnicity, unemployment status, and incarceration status for participants and their female partners), relationship characteristics (type of relationship, length of relationship, participants' contribution to household expenses), and self-reports of heavy episodic drinking, defined for men as consuming 5 or more alcoholic drinks² and for women as consuming 4 or more alcoholic drinks¹⁴ within a 6-hour period.

To estimate the associations between the independent variables of couples' illicit drug use and the dependent variables of any form of intimate partner violence, we used logistic regression with the covariance adjustment (Table 1); covariance adjustment also included measures of heavy episodic drinking, because of the association between heavy episodic drinking and intimate partner violence.¹⁵⁻¹⁷

Separate models were constructed for use of each drug by the female partner only, by the male partner only, and by both partners. The reference group for each of these models was no use of the drug by the participant and his partner. For a drug of interest, we included covariance adjustment for use of the other illicit drugs (e.g., heroin and marijuana when crack or cocaine was the drug of interest).

TABLE 1—Logistic Regression of Perpetrating Intimate Partner Violence in the Past 6 Months on Couples' Illicit Drug Use in the Past 6 Months From Sample of Men (N = 356) From Methadone Maintenance Treatment Programs: New York City, 2000–2001

Couples' Illicit Drug Use	No.	Any Form of Intimate Partner Violence, ^a Adjusted OR ^b (95% CIs)	Any Form of Severe Intimate Partner Violence, ^c Adjusted OR ^b (95% CI)
Crack or cocaine			
Neither partner used	201	NA	NA
Only male participant used	77	1.2 (0.7, 2.2)	0.4 (0.1, 2.0)
Only female partner used	25	3.3 (1.2, 8.7)**	5.8 (1.4, 24.0)**
Both used	53	1.9 (0.9, 4.0)*	2.5 (0.7, 8.4)
Heroin			
Neither partner used	165	NA	NA
Only male participant used	129	1.4 (0.8, 2.4)	1.7 (0.5, 5.4)
Only female partner used	9	1.1 (0.2, 5.1)	6.7 (0.8, 56.3)*
Both used	53	1.4 (0.7, 3.1)	6.8 (1.9, 24.6)***
Marijuana			
Neither partner used	193	NA	NA
Only male participant used	85	0.8 (0.5, 1.5)	0.8 (0.3, 2.4)
Only female partner used	29	1.2 (0.5, 2.9)	0.8 (0.1, 5.0)
Both used	49	1.4 (0.7, 2.8)	0.8 (0.2, 3.2)
Polydrug use^d			
Neither partner used	199	NA	NA
Only male participant used	97	1.3 (0.8, 2.3)	1.0 (0.3, 3.1)
Only female partner used	18	2.4 (0.8, 7.0)	5.2 (1.0, 26.9)**
Both used	42	1.9 (0.9, 4.3)	10.0 (2.6, 39.1)***
Any illicit drug^e			
Neither partner used	70	NA	NA
Only male participant used	141	1.2 (0.6, 2.3)	1.0 (0.2, 4.8)
Only female partner used	26	1.3 (0.5, 3.5)	0.9 (0.1, 11.3)
Both used	119	2.1 (1.0, 4.3)**	3.7 (0.8, 16.6)*

Note. OR = odds ratio; CI = confidence interval; NA = not applicable.

^aAny form of intimate partner violence encompasses both minor and severe incidents of any type of intimate partner violence (physical, sexual, or injurious). Physical intimate partner violence refers to the type of violent assault (e.g., slapping, pushing, kicking) perpetrated against the partner, whereas injurious intimate violence refers to the consequences of partner-inflicted physical injury (e.g., need for medical attention, bone or tissue damage, felt pain).

^bThe adjusted covariates were participant's age, years of schooling, income, ethnicity, unemployment status, incarceration status, duration on methadone, and methadone dose; female partner's age, years of schooling, ethnicity, unemployment status, and incarceration status; type of relationship, whether living together, length of relationship, participant's contribution to household income; and participant's other drug use, partner's other drug use, participant's heavy episodic drinking, and partner's heavy episodic drinking.

^cDefined as any incident of any type of intimate partner violence (sexual, physical, or injurious) that was rated severe. CTS2 items for each subscale (injurious, physical or sexual IPV) fall into minor and severe categories. Acts of violence (regardless of type—injurious, physical or sexual) are classified as minor or severe acts of violence. Table 2 contains examples of minor and severe levels of violence.

^dPolydrug use was defined as use of at least 2 of the 3 illicit drugs asked about (i.e., crack or cocaine, heroin, and marijuana).

^eAny illicit drug use was defined as use of any of the 3 drugs asked about (i.e., crack or cocaine, heroin, and marijuana).

* $P < .10$; ** $P < .05$; *** $P < .01$.

RESULTS

Of the 356 participants, 45% were Latino, 38% were African American, 11% were Caucasian, 2% were Native American, and 4% were mixed race. Their mean age was 43.6 years (SD=8.5). The percentages of male participants who used illicit drugs in the past 6 months were as follows: crack or cocaine,

37%; heroin, 51%; marijuana, 38%; and any illicit drug, 73%. For the female partner, the percentages were as follows: crack or cocaine, 22%; heroin, 17%; marijuana, 22%; and any illicit drug, 41%.

Table 2 shows the prevalence of men who perpetrated intimate partner violence by type and severity. Results indicated that 58% of the sample reported perpetrating any form of

TABLE 2—Prevalence Among Sample of Men (N = 356) From Methadone Maintenance Treatment Programs Who Have Perpetrated Intimate Partner Violence in Their Lifetime and in the Past 6 Months, by Type and Severity: New York City, 2000–2001

Type of Intimate Partner Violence	Lifetime		Past 6 Months	
	No.	%	No.	%
Any form ^a	208	58	137	38
Any form, severe ^b	62	17	28	8
Physical ^c	173	49	95	27
Physical, severe	57	16	25	7
Sexual ^d	113	32	74	21
Sexual, severe	15	4	7	2
Injurious ^e	68	19	36	10
Injurious, severe	17	5	11	3

^aIntimate partner violence was defined as any incident of minor or severe type of intimate partner violence (physical, sexual, or injurious).

^bSevere intimate partner violence was defined as any incident of severe type of intimate partner violence (physical, sexual, or injurious).

^cAn example question for minor physical intimate partner violence was “I threw something at my partner that could hurt”; for severe physical intimate partner violence, “I used a knife or gun on my partner.”

^dAn example question for minor sexual intimate partner violence was “I made my partner have sexual intercourse without a condom”; for severe sexual intimate partner violence, “I used force (such as hitting, holding down, or using a weapon) to make my partner have oral or anal sexual intercourse.”

^eAn example question for minor injurious intimate partner violence was “My partner had a sprain, bruise, or small cut because of a fight with me”; for severe injurious intimate partner violence, “My partner passed out from being hit on the head in a fight with me.”

intimate partner violence against their current partner in their lifetime and 38% in the past 6 months.

Table 1 presents the association between illicit drug use by participants and their female partners and perpetration of intimate partner violence. Crack or cocaine use by the female partner was significantly associated with perpetration of any intimate partner violence and any severe intimate partner violence. Heroin use by both partners was significantly associated with perpetration of any severe intimate partner violence. Polydrug use by the female partner and by both partners was significantly associated with perpetration of any severe intimate partner violence. Any illicit drug use by both partners also was significantly associated with perpetration of any intimate partner violence.

DISCUSSION

The high rates of perpetrating different types of recent intimate partner violence reported in this random sample of men attending methadone maintenance treatment programs underscore the need to address the co-occurring public health threat of intimate partner violence and drug abuse. Multiple associations were found between the use of different drugs by the female intimate partner or both partners and perpetration of intimate partner violence. Although the data on female partners' illicit drug use were collected from the male participants, findings suggested that drug treatment programs should assess how patterns of couples' drug use and female intimate partner drug use may be creating relationship problems that lead to intimate partner violence. By identifying and addressing the service needs of drug-using female partners and couples at risk for intimate partner violence, drug treatment programs may reduce couples' drug use and help stem the epidemic of intimate partner violence and its deleterious effects on this population. ■

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Contributors

N. El-Bassel and L. Gilbert conceptualized and implemented the study. N. El-Bassel conceptualized the data analysis plan, wrote the brief, and supervised the process of data analysis. L. Gilbert participated in the conceptualization of the data analysis and revision of the brief. E. Wu participated in the data analysis and revision of the brief. M. Chang conducted the data analysis. J. Fontdevila participated in the conceptualization of the study and reviewed the brief.

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Human Participant Protection

The protocol was reviewed and approved by the institutional review boards of Columbia University and the

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