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# The role of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) on People in Opiate Agonist Treatment: The importance of feeling unloved

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# Agenda

🔍 Introduction & Background

🔍 Methodology

🔍 PTSD and ACEs

🔍 Findings

🔍 Conclusions & Discussion

*The authors declare no conflict of interest related to this presentation*

# Opiate Agonist Treatment in Ireland

➢ Approximately 21,000 individuals have an opiate use disorder *(Health Research Board 2019)*

  o 10,316 in Opiate Agonist Treatment (OAT) (2017 estimate), *(Delargy, Crowley & Van Hout, 2019)*

  o 60% attend specialised treatment centres with 40% attending community GP and pharmacy services

➢ Methadone is the most common treatment for opiate use disorder in Ireland (>95%)

  • Number of years an individual remains in treatment is usually very long (*Comiskey, et al. 2018*)

# Background for the current study

- Baseline study in 2017 collected data on treatment outcomes and service users' experiences of their current treatment (n = 131)

- The Study Aim was to explore whether the current Nursing model was meeting clients needs and provide recommendations *(Comiskey at al. 2018; Comiskey at al. 2019)*

➢ People openly talked about they're chaotic childhoods growing up; particularly, neglect, abuse and household dysfunction. <u>These data not collected as part of the study.</u>

➢ A follow up study was recommended by the research team to measure trauma and adverse childhood experiences among this cohort.

Participants: 104 participants re-interviewed (Female, n= 38: Male, n= 66)

## Questionnaires utilised in this study

✓ Demographic questionnaire

✓ Opiate Treatment Index, *(Drake el .al 1992)*

❖ 10 item Adverse Childhood Experiences Questionnaire, *(*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, https://www.cdc.gov)

❖ 20 item PCL-5, Self report measure of current PTSD. *(National Center for PTSD, https://www.ptsd.va.gov)*

❖ *= Added for the follow-up study*

# Treatment Findings

- Mean age 42 years (Females 39 years; Males 44 years)

- Average time in current treatment: 11 years (Range: 3 months to 27 years) *(62% ≥ 2nd Treatment)*

  ➤ **Harm reduction**

    ➤ Low levels of heroin use

    ➤ Low levels of HIV risk taking and injecting behaviour

    ➤ Very low incidents of criminality

  ➤ **Daily use: Cannabis (38%); Tranquillisers (63%).**

  ➤ **Weekly use: Alcohol (31%); Crack cocaine (19%).**

# PTSD & ACE Findings

➢ 55% of people reported 4 or more ACEs (23% had an ACE score of ≥ 7)

➢ PTSD mean score was 30 (Female = 37; Male = 26; p= .010).

   ❖ Scores ≥ 31 to 33, are considered appropriate for a PTSD diagnosis. *(Bovin et al., 2015).*

   ❖ 45% of people had trauma scores ≥ 31

   ❖ 40% of people had trauma scores ≥ 33

➢ Psychological wellbeing almost two times poorer than the general population

   ❖ Sample mean GHQ-28  score  = 7 (Female = 9; Male =6)

# Findings: Adverse Childhood Experiences
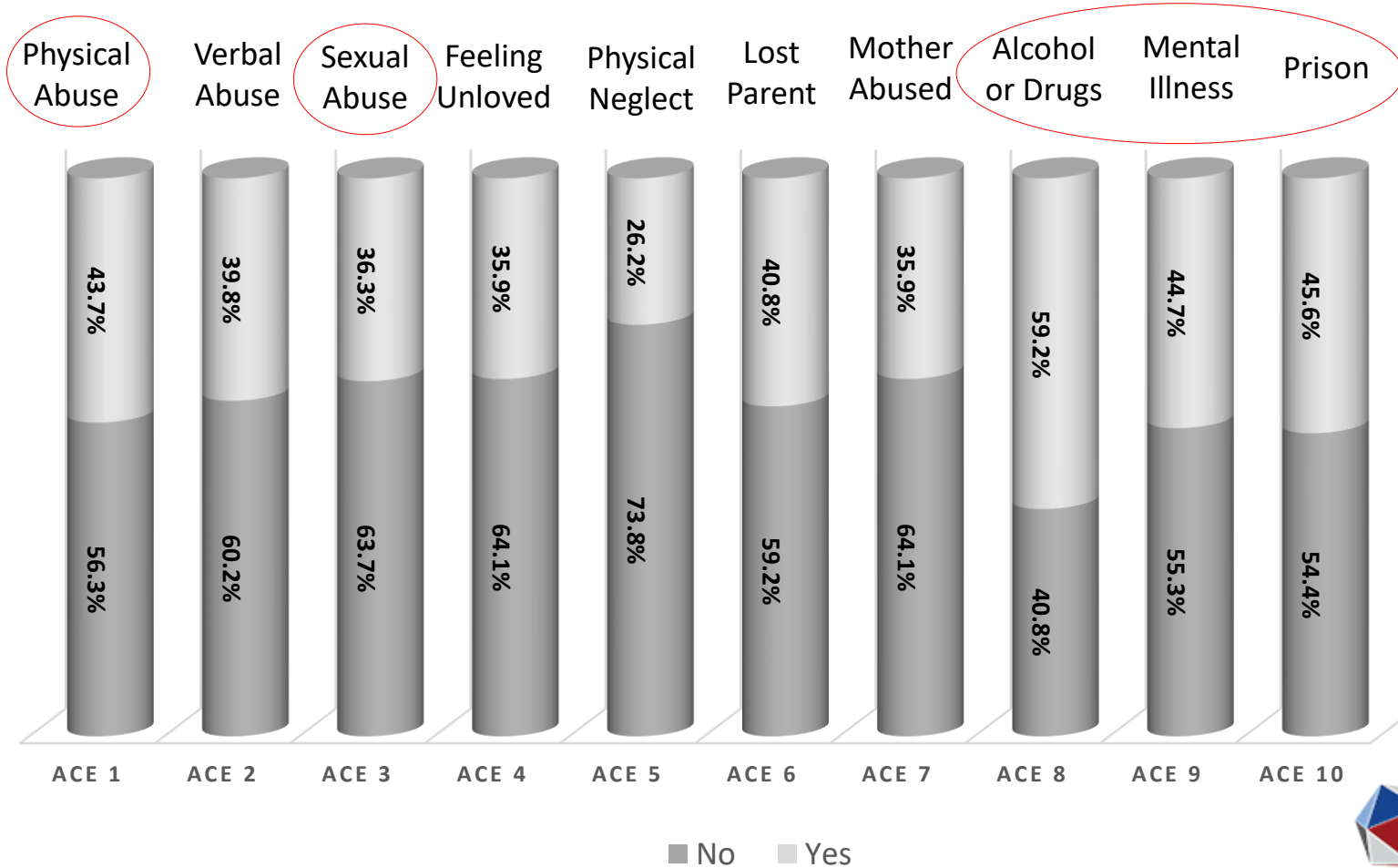
# Adverse Childhood Experiences & PTSD

| ACE question | d f | n | $X^2$ | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **ACE 1. Push grab of slap or throw something at you #** | 1 | 10 | 18.537 | <.001*** |
| **ACE 2. Swear at you insult or put down #** | 1 | 10 | 25.308 | <.001*** |
| ACE 3. Touch or fondle you or have you touch them in a sexual way | 1 | 10 | 6.624 | .010** |
| **ACE 4. Nobody loved you/ thought you were important #** | 1 | 10 | 29.122 | <.001*** |
| ACE 5. Feel that you didn't have enough to eat, wear dirty clothes | 1 | 10 | 5.176 | .023* |
| ACE 6. Lost a biological parent | 1 | 10 | 10.321 | .001** |
| **ACE 7. Mother ever pushed grabbed slapped of repeatedly hit #** | 1 | 10 | 13.874 | <.001*** |
| **ACE 8. Lived with a problem drinker or used street drugs #** | 1 | 10 | 20.609 | <.001*** |
| **ACE 9. Household member depressed or had a mental illness #** | 1 | 10 | 17.066 | <.001*** |
| ACE 10. Did household member ever go to prison | 1 | 10 | .546 | .460 ns |

*Significance levels: * p <.05: ** p < .01: *** p < .001: ns = not significant*
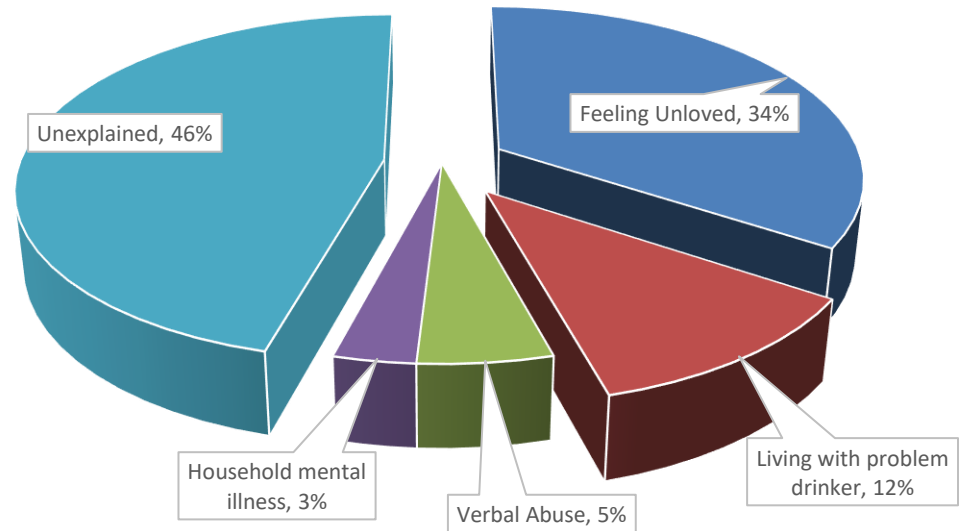*# Factors chosen for regression analysis*

Analysis showed four ACEs explained 54% of the variance in PTSD scores $(R^2 = .54, F (4, 98) = 30.285, p < .001***)$,

The feeling they were unloved as a child was found to be the strongest predictor of PTSD explaining 34% of the variance in PTSD scores

A significantly higher proportion of women (54.1%) felt unloved as children than men (25.8%); $(X^2 = 8.25, p = .004**)$.

ACE predictors of PTSD



- Unexplained, 46%
- Feeling Unloved, 34%
- Living with problem drinker, 12%
- Verbal Abuse, 5%
- Household mental illness, 3%

# Conclusions & Discussion

- OAT is effective in retaining and _maintaining_ people in OAT

  - Aging cohort; mean age 42 years

  - Up to 40% of people in OAT at risk of PTSD

- Childhood emotional neglect was found to be a significant predicting of PTSD among the subjects of this study

- Screening all service users for ACEs

- Trauma Informed treatment service

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# Thank You