

DEVELOPMENT OF GAMBLING DISORDER IN AN INDIVIDUAL WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER FOLLOWING METHYLPHENIDATE USE: A CASE REPORT

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OBJECTIVE: Psychostimulants are widely used for ADHD treatment, but their adverse effects require careful monitoring. Their misuse by individuals without ADHD is a recognized concern, and some populations may be more vulnerable to their neuropsychiatric effects. In this case, methylphenidate misuse in an individual with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) appeared to trigger gambling disorder. This case highlights the potential for psychostimulant misuse to induce gambling disorder, particularly in neurodevelopmental conditions, emphasizing the importance of careful monitoring.

CASE: A 21-year-old male patient was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder at the age of four. Despite not using any psychotropic medication, he had been able to maintain a high level of functioning through various support programs. However, over the past five months, despite having no prior history of gambling, he began engaging in online gambling. He reported that he was unable to discontinue this behavior despite experiencing financial losses and deterioration in his relationship with his family, leading him to seek psychiatric consultation. Based on the history obtained and the psychiatric evaluation, it

was learned that the patient had started taking methylphenidate at a dose of 18 mg/day eight months ago, despite not having a diagnosis of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). As the patient had no ADHD diagnosis and gambling disorder emerged after starting methylphenidate, discontinuation was recommended. Behavioral strategies were also provided. During follow-up, he initially experienced gambling urges but managed to resist them and applied the strategies. After three months, he reported a significant decrease in cravings and had abstained from gambling for six months. (Informed consent was obtained from the patient.)

DISCUSSION: This case suggests that the misuse of psychostimulant medications may trigger gambling behavior in individuals with autism spectrum disorder. Future studies are necessary to understand the underlying mechanisms of this relationship and to develop risk assessment and prevention strategies.

Keywords: Methylphenidate, gambling disorder, side effect, autism spectrum disorder