



Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences Section – 2004

I14 Tattoos and Antisocial Personality Disorder

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand how the presence of tattoos on inpatients in a forensic psychiatric setting can alert clinicians to the diagnosis of antisocial personality disorder.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by deriving a better understanding of the relationship of tattoos and the presence of antisocial personality disorder in forensic psychiatric inpatients could positively impact treatment of this population by assisting clinicians anticipate potential problematic affective and behavioral states and by serving as a starting point for developing rapport and obtaining historical information from individuals who are frequently distrustful of psychiatric treatment.

Objective: The relationship of tattoos to the diagnosis of antisocial personality disorder was explored in a forensic psychiatric inpatient setting. It was hypothesized that a greater proportion of forensic inpatients that possess tattoos have antisocial personality disorder. **Method:** Forensic psychiatric inpatients (N=36) were administered a semi-structured interview to determine the presence of a tattoo or other forms of decorative body marking (i.e., body piercing other than ear lobes or branding). Antisocial personality disorder was determined by criteria on a DSM-IV antisocial personality disorder checklist and by DSM-IV admission diagnosis. Demographic characteristics of the patients were also assessed.

Results: Significantly more forensic psychiatric inpatients who endorsed having tattoos had the diagnosis of antisocial personality disorder. These patients, compared to those with tattoos but without the diagnosis of antisocial personality disorder, had a significantly greater number of tattoos and a significantly greater percentage of their body surface area tattooed. They were also significantly more likely to have a history of juvenile delinquency and family members with tattoos.

Conclusions: The presence of tattoos on forensic psychiatric inpatients may be predictive for the diagnosis of antisocial personality disorder and may inform the clinician of possible affective and behavioral states that may develop in treatment.

Tattoo, Antisocial Personality Disorder, Forensic Psychiatric Inpatient Setting