

Abstract

Med Hypotheses. 2002 Sep;59(3):330-3.

Role of selenium depletion in the etiopathogenesis of depression in patients with alcoholism.

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BACKGROUND: Chronic heavy alcohol consumption adversely affects both macronutrients and micronutrients. Alcohol use affects selenium status. Considerable evidence suggests that selenium status may modify mental function. The author suggests that the effects of alcohol intake on mood, behavior, and cognition may be partly mediated by biological changes related to selenium deficiency.

RESULTS: It has been observed that there is a trend towards the normalization of selenium levels in patients with alcoholism after a relatively short period of abstinence from alcohol. It has also been observed that when depression develops in persons with alcoholism, they are likely to improve fairly rapidly after a relatively short period of abstinence from alcohol without therapy aimed at the depressive symptoms.

CONCLUSION: The author suggests that improvement in depressed patients after a period of abstinence from alcohol might be in part related to the normalization of selenium status. Treatment and prevention of comorbid alcoholism and mood disorders require more attention by research workers, practicing physicians, and the general public. Future studies of the etiology and pathogenesis of mood disorders in patients with alcoholism are merited.

PMID: 12208163

