

Title:

Screening for Substance Abuse and Psychiatric Disorders Among Women Patients in a VA Health Care System

Source:

Davis TM, Bush, KR, Kivlahan DR, Dobie DJ, Bradley KA. Screening for Substance Abuse and Psychiatric Disorders Among Women Patients in a VA Health Care System. *Psychiatric Services*. 54 (2) 2003: 214 – 218.

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Conclusion:

Substance abuse is common among women VA patients and is associated with younger age and with screening positive for other psychiatric conditions. Providers are expected to follow up on positive screening tests, and these data indicate substantial provider burden.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study was to examine the amount of past-year smoking, hazardous drinking, other drug abuse, and psychiatric disorders in a population of women who had received care from a Veterans Affairs (VA) Puget Sound Health Care System between October 1, 1996 and January 1, 1998. A 16 page questionnaire was mailed to 1935 eligible women veterans. 1257 returned the surveys that had substance abuse information completed. The survey asked about hazardous drinking (including binge drinking), problem drinking (using the TWEAK measures for scoring and tolerance questions), other drug abuse (any qualified as a positive response), and mental health symptoms (screening for current major depression, panic disorder, eating disorders and posttraumatic stress disorder -PTSD).

Findings:

Of eligible patients, 1,257 (65%) returned surveys with complete substance use data. Patients reported a relatively high rate of past year smoking, hazardous and problem drinking, or both. The rate of past year drug use was much lower. Younger age women was strongly associated with greater substance abuse; women under age 35 screened positive for smoking, hazardous or problem drinking, or drug abuse. Screening positive for psychiatric condition was also associated with substance abuse: The rate of past year drug abuse doubled among women screening positive for a psychiatric condition. Of the women who screened positive for depression, PTSD, eating disorders, or panic disorders, 57% screened positive for substance abuse (including smoking).

Implications for Prevention:

The above results suggest that the rate of concurrent substance abuse and other behavioral health conditions, have relatively high rates of substance abuse. The rate of concurrent substance abuse and other behavioral health conditions adds significantly to the burden of assessment and management of these conditions for clinicians in a variety of settings. Some patients may be appropriately referred to specialized addiction treatment services, others will not be appropriate for or will not accept referral to these services. The above results also suggest that a need to

integrate substance abuse expertise into all levels of VA health programs for women including both primary care and mental health clinics.

Summary Provided By:  
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