Assessment and Treatment of Alcohol Use Disorders in Veterans

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Overview

- Prevalence of alcohol use disorders among Veterans
- Alcohol use screening and treatment recommendations for Veterans
- The VA approach to mental health services
- Referral options with VA
In 2007, about 23.2 million Americans had a substance use disorder that required treatment (9.4% of the U.S. pop 12+ years old). Of these individuals, only 2.4 million received treatment (SAMHSA, 2007).

People with substance use disorders are twice as likely to suffer from mood and anxiety disorders (NIDA, 2009).

Substance use disorders are costly (NIDA, 2008). Health and crime-related costs, plus lost productivity account for:

- $181 billion (illicit drugs)
- $185 billion (alcohol)
Younger Veterans were more likely than older Veterans to report past-month alcohol use, binge drinking, and heavy drinking.

Among males 18-25, Veterans were more likely than nonveterans to report past-month alcohol use.

Within older age categories, rates are similar for Veterans and nonveterans.
Clinical Approach to MH Services

- Recognition and Diagnosis
- Patient Education
- Treatment
- Monitoring
Substance Abuse is defined as a maladaptive pattern of substance use manifested by one (or more) of the following, occurring within a 12-month period:

- Recurrent substance use resulting in a failure to fulfill major role obligations at work, school, or home
- Recurrent substance use in situations in which it is physically hazardous
- Recurrent substance-related legal problems
- Continued substance use despite having persistent or recurrent social or interpersonal problems caused or exacerbated by the effects of the substance
Criteria for Substance Use Disorders

**Substance Dependence** is a maladaptive pattern of substance use, as manifested by three (or more) of the following, occurring at any time in the same 12-month period:

- Tolerance
- Withdrawal
- The substance is often taken in larger amounts or over a longer period than was intended
- Unsuccessful efforts to cut down or control substance use
- A great deal of time is spent related to the substance
- Important social, occupational, or recreational activities are given up or reduced because of substance use
- The substance use is continued despite knowledge of having a persistent or recurrent physical or psychological problem that is likely to have been caused or exacerbated by the substance
Screening for Alcohol Use Disorders

**Setting**
- Confidential
- Patient Centered
- Non-confrontational

**1 Standard Drink** =
- 12 ounces of beer,
- 5 ounces of wine,
- 1.5 oz of hard liquor, or
- 8 ounces of malt liquor

**Recommended limits**
- **Men:** No more than 14 drinks a week, and no more than 4 drinks per occasion
- **Women:** No more than 7 drinks a week, and no more than 3 drinks per occasion
# AUDIT-C Alcohol Use Screen

Please read each item carefully and select the correct answer for you.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. How often did you have a drink containing alcohol in the past year?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>❑ Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>❑ Monthly or less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>❑ Two to four times a month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>❑ Two to three times per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>❑ Four or more times per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. How many drinks containing alcohol did you have on a typical day when you were drinking in the past year?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>❑ 1 or 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>❑ 3 or 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>❑ 5 or 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>❑ 7 to 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>❑ 10 or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. How often did you have six or more drinks on one occasion in the past year?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>❑ Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>❑ Less than monthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>❑ Monthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>❑ Weekly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>❑ Daily or almost daily</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**AUDIT-C Alcohol Use Screen-Scoring**

Please read each item carefully and select the correct answer for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How often did you have a drink containing alcohol in the past year?</td>
<td>Never (0 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monthly or less (1 point)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Two to four times a month (2 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Two to three times per week (3 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Four or more times per week (4 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How many drinks containing alcohol did you have on a typical day</td>
<td>1 or 2 (0 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 or 4 (1 point)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 or 6 (2 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7 to 9 (3 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10 or more (4 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How often did you have six or more drinks on one occasion in the</td>
<td>Never (0 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less than monthly (1 point)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monthly (2 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weekly (3 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daily or almost daily (4 points)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Clinical Approach to MH Services

- Recognition and Diagnosis
- Patient Education
- Treatment options
- Monitoring
Patient Education

Handouts – MyHealtheVet
(www.healthwise.net/myhealthevet; search alcohol abuse and dependence)

- Alcohol Abuse and Dependence
- Interactive Tool: Do you have a drinking problem?
- Alcohol problems: How to stop drinking
- Alcohol and drug problems
- Alcohol problems: Helping someone get treatment
- Quick Tips: Cutting back on drinking

Web Sites

- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) - The NSDUH Report: Alcohol Use and Alcohol Related Risk Behaviors among Veterans (http://www.nami.org/...)
- Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies (ABCT) – Alcohol Abuse Fact Sheet (www.abct.org; www.abct.org/docs/dMembers/FactSheets/ALCOHOL%200707.pdf)
Treatment Options for Alcohol Use Problems

- Brief interventions
- Individual or group psychotherapy
  - Motivation to change
  - Increase awareness of triggers and coping skills to deal with triggers and relapse risks
  - Treatment for other mental health problems
  - Family counseling
  - Alcoholics Anonymous
- Residential programs
- Detoxification
- Medication
Common Components of a Brief Intervention

1. Expressed concern from the provider, regarding unhealthy alcohol use
2. Feedback linking the patient's drinking to his/her health issues
3. Education about recommended drinking limits
4. Offer of explicit advice to cut down drinking or abstain
5. Follow-up 2-4 weeks later to assess the patient's response
6. Referral to specialty addictions treatment if indicated
Finding Mental Health Service

- VA Medical Centers and Vet Centers
  - www.va.gov or www.vetcenter.va.gov

- www.mentalhealth.va.gov
  - Veteran’s Affairs Facility Locator
  - Finding a therapist fact sheet
  - Hotline numbers SAMHSA
  - Mental Health Services Locator (SAMHSA)

- www.abct.org
  - www.find-a-therapist.com
OK VA Referral Locations

Oklahoma City VA Medical Center
921 N.E. 13th Street
OKC, OK 73104
Phone: (405) 456-1000

North May Clinic,
2915 Pine Ridge Road
OKC, OK 73120
(405) 752-6500, option 8

Stillwater Outpatient Clinic
1815 West 6th Street,
Stillwater, OK 74074
(405) 743-7300

Altus Outpatient Clinic
201 South Park Lane
Altus, OK 73521
(580) 482-9020

Enid Outpatient Clinic
915 E. Garriott, Suite G.
Enid, OK 73701
(580) 242-5100

Lawton/Ft Sill Clinic
4303 Pittman and Thomas Bldg 4303
Ft Sill, OK 73503
Phone: 580-585-5600

Konawa CBOC
527 W 3rd St
Konawa, OK 74849
Phone: 580-925-3286

Blackwell CBOC
1009 W. Ferguson Ave.
Blackwell, OK 74631
Phone: 580-363-0052

Veterans Clinic of North Texas
1800 7th St
Wichita Falls, TX 76301
Phone: 940-723-2373

Muskogee VA Medical Center
1011 Honor Heights Drive
Muskogee, OK 74401-1318
(918) 577-3000

For general referral and eligibility of Vets:
(405) 456-1000, ext. 65774 or 65434
www.oklahoma.va.gov/patients/eligibility.asp
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If screen is negative, AUDIT-C is done yearly in the VAMC.

If screen is positive, an AUDIT-C or similar screening should be used whenever Veteran is seen.

If Veteran does not respond to a brief intervention, they should be offered a referral to addictions treatment.

Male patients who engaged in 6 telephone calls (using motivational interview techniques) reported significantly cutting down their drinking at 3 months compared to a control group. (Brown, et al. Randomized-controlled trial of a telephone and mail intervention for alcohol use disorders: Three-month drinking outcomes. Alcohol Clin Exp Res. Aug 2007;31(8):1372-1379).

Helping Patients Who Drink Too Much

Resources

U.S. Dept of Veterans Affairs

- [www.mentalhealth.va.gov](http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov)

SUD QUERI Tools: Addressing Alcohol Misuse in Medical Patients

- AUDIT-C: Frequently Asked Questions
- Brief Alcohol Counseling for Alcohol Misuse
- Tools for Further Assessment of Alcohol Misuse

Helping Patients Who Drink Too Much

Want to receive clinical reminders about this content?

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