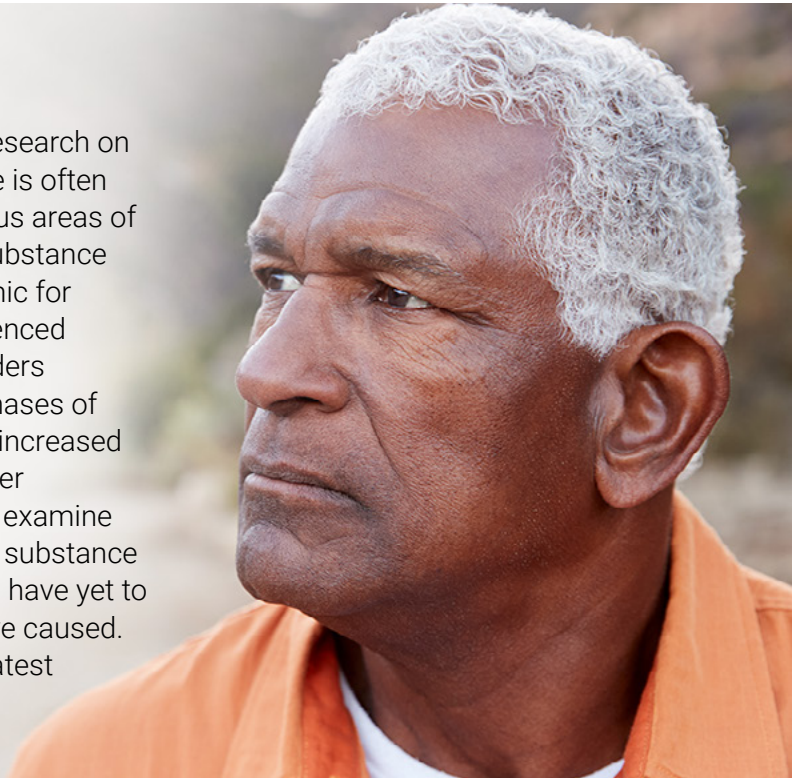


In This Issue

In this month's *Hot Topics Newsletter*, we feature the latest research on substance use and misuse in older adults. Substance misuse is often overlooked in older adults, but has large implications in various areas of health, wellbeing, and functioning. Research suggests that substance use and misuse have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic for various reasons, including social isolation. Some also experienced interruptions in access to treatment for substance use disorders during pandemic-related shutdowns. Data during the early phases of the pandemic suggest that while older adults did experience increased substance use and misuse, this increase was relatively smaller compared to younger cohorts ^{1,2,3,4}. Research is beginning to examine factors that may contribute to pandemic-related increases in substance use in older people. This topic deserves extra attention as we have yet to understand the long-term effects that the pandemic may have caused. As always, be sure to check the E4 Center's [website](#) for the latest information, events, and training opportunities.



[Increased Alcohol Use During the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Effect of Mental Health and Age in a Cross-Sectional Sample of Social Media Users in the U.S.](#)

Capasso and colleagues report survey data from nearly 6,000 adult social media users in the U.S. They explored relationships among age, depression, anxiety, and alcohol use during the pandemic. Their data were consistent with other published findings that alcohol use increased in all age groups, and that these increases were less dramatic for older adults. However, for older groups, increases in alcohol use were more strongly associated with the presence of symptoms of depression and anxiety. Authors discuss the role of coping and make interesting comparisons to data gathered during other large scale traumatic events in recent history.

[Late- and Typical-Onset Heroin Use Among Older Adults Seeking Treatment for Opioid Use Disorder](#)

Lynch and colleagues analyzed admission records data from the Treatment Episodes Data Set-Admissions (TEDS-A) to examine opioid use disorder with heroin use in adults aged 55 and older. They found that first-time treatment admissions for opioid use disorder with heroin nearly tripled from 2008-2017. They describe characteristics of older heroin users admitted with

typical- (earlier onset) versus late-onset opioid use disorder, including demographics, referral sources, and frequency and method of use. These findings are important to help identify prevention and treatment strategies for this unique group that has not been well-studied.

[Gender Differences in Any Alcohol Screening and Discussions with Providers Among Older Adults in the United States, 2015 to 2019](#)

Mauro and colleagues report data from nearly 10,000 older Americans on the prevalence of alcohol screening and alcohol discussions in healthcare settings. A quarter of older adults reported that they received no screening or discussion about alcohol in their healthcare interactions in the past year. They also found that older women were less likely than older men to discuss alcohol use with their providers. These findings are concerning, given increases in unhealthy alcohol use old older adults, and particularly for women. The authors hypothesize potential reasons for the lack of discussions in these demographic groups and emphasize the importance of addressing alcohol use in clinical settings with older adults.

Adverse Childhood Experience Patterns, Major Depressive Disorder, and Substance Use Disorder in Older Adults

Kim and colleagues report data from over 11,000 older adults participating in the National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions III (NESARC-III). Latent class analysis revealed four classes of adverse childhood experiences (ACE): high adversity, low adversity, child abuse, and parental substance use. Rates of substance use disorder (SUD) were higher in the high adversity, child abuse, and parental substance use classes compared to the low adversity class. Rates of depression were higher in the high adversity and child abuse classes compared to the low adversity class and for these groups, depression was a mediator between ACE and SUD. This work underscores the long-term impact of adverse childhood events as well as the importance of trauma-informed care principles in older adults with SUD.

Management of Chronic Pain in Nursing Homes: Navigating Challenges to Improve Person-Centered Care

Sheikh and colleagues outline recommendations for a person-centered care approach for chronic pain management in nursing homes. This practical roadmap summarizes nonpharmacological approaches to pain management as well as a roadmap for safe prescribing of pain medications to minimize risk for adverse drug events in this vulnerable population. This includes a stepwise



Written for the E4 Center by Susan Buehler, PhD

strategy for tapering chronic opioid therapy in the nursing home setting as well as a strategy for deprescribing chronic pain medications.

Prescription Tranquilizer/Sedative Misuse Motives Across the US Population

Schepis and colleagues report data on misuse of prescription tranquilizers/sedatives in 223,520 respondents from the US National Survey on Drug Use and Health from 2015-2018. Motives for misuse varied by age group. Highest rates of misuse for purposes of self-treatment (to sleep/ relax) were found in adults 65 and older. Highest rates of recreational use were found in adolescents. Data also suggest that relationships between tranquilizer/sedative misuse and mental health were stronger in adults 50 and older.

Recent Trends in Cannabis Use in Older Americans

In this letter published in the Annals of Internal Medicine, Maxwell and her team describe recent data collected from telephone survey data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System to describe cannabis use in older adults aged 55 and older. They found that cannabis use increased from 2016-2018 among most age stratifications of older adults. Men were nearly twice as likely to report cannabis use compared to women. They provide detailed data by state and break down trends of use based on state legalization status.

Testing Relationships Between Racial-Ethnic Identity, Racial-Ethnic Discrimination, and Substance Misuse Among Black and Latinx Older Adults in a Nationally Representative Sample

Using data from the NESARC-III survey, Reyes and colleagues found that for Latinx older adults, discrimination was positively associated with substance misuse and higher ethnic identity was associated with reduced illicit drug use. They also found a moderating effect of racial-ethnic identity and racial-ethnic discrimination on illicit drug use in Latinx older adults, suggesting that higher ethnic identity may protect against the relationship between discrimination and drug use in this population. These relationships were not significant in Black older adults.

Upcoming Events

You can register for these events or learn more by going to our website at e4center.org/calendar

SEPT

Trauma Informed Care

September 1
@ 12:00 pm - 2:00 pm CDT

OCT

Culturally-Responsive Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) with Older Adults

October 1 @ 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm CDT

Cannabis Use in Older Adults

October 6 @ 12:00 pm - 2:00 pm CDT

NOV

High Risk Medications and Polypharmacy for Non-Prescribers

November 3
@ 12:00 pm - 2:00 pm CDT