

# Intervention Strategies for Substance Abuse Among Older Adults

## Background

- Substance abuse in older adults is a serious public health concern.
- Approximately 88.4% of adults over 60 use at least one prescription drug and 25% of these drugs have abuse potential.
- 53% of studies on substance abuse excluded adults >65 years old and 72% excluded >75 years old.
- 66% of older adult hospital visits are caused by adverse drug effects.
- Despite the lack of research on this topic, several studies have been conducted to examine the effect of interventions on reducing substance abuse in older adults. It is important to review research evidence that has been done for potential use and further research.

## Purpose

To review the evidence that has been published about substance abuse in older adult populations and treatment options and make recommendations for further research related to the subject.

## Methods

Using CINAHL, MEDLINE, and PubMed databases



Limited to articles published from 1994 to present day in English.



Key words: elderly, older adults, drugs, substance abuse, intervention, treatment and the filter 65+



46 abstracts were evaluated



25 articles met the criteria, were included in the matrix and ranked based on relevancy using rubric found in table 1

**Table 1: Relevancy Rubric**

	0	1	2
<b>Year</b>	>20 Years Ago	10-20 Years Ago	<10 Years Ago
<b>Age</b>	<55 Years Old	55-65 Years Old	65+ Years Old
<b>Intervention</b>	No intervention strategies included	Reference to intervention strategies but not enough research behind it	Intervention strategies included

**Table 2: Matrix Example**

<b>Specifics</b>	<b>Journal:</b> Substance Abuse: Research and Treatment <b>Author:</b> Alexis Kuerbis, Paul Sacco <b>Year Released:</b> 2013
<b>Methods</b>	-Reviewed articles about treatment -Compared results -Determined best course of action for future in regards to treatment
<b>Modes of Therapy</b>	-Counter conditioning -Rehabilitation -Community living -Naltrexone -Cognitive behavior therapy -Motivational interviewing
<b>Results</b>	-Age specific treatment required -With greater treatment exposure, older adults performed better than younger adults in recovery -Studies lacked adequate sample size
<b>Relevancy Ranking (6/6)</b>	<b>Current:</b> 2 <b>Age:</b> 1 <b>Intervention:</b> 2 <b>Total:</b> 5

## Results

- 48 article were reviewed, all were ranked based on their relevance and evaluated for intervention strategies
- Of these article, 25 displayed relevant intervention strategies
- Many of these strategies were in the preliminary phases of testing so will require further research
- Relevant Strategies:
  1. Educational programs for the patient, family care givers and medical professionals
  2. Group intervention involving adults of the same age
  3. Age specific interventions
  4. Re-evaluation of diagnosing and prescribing process
- Older adults require specialized interventions that differ from those commonly used in younger populations.

**Table 3: Intervention Strategies**

Type of Intervention	Content	Results
<b>Psychosocial</b> -Age specific -Group therapy	Focused specifically on older adults and their needs. Older adults were integrated into groups to promote social relations and interactions.	Overall, age specific therapy and group therapy only involving older adults significantly decreased substance abuse.
<b>Education</b> -Patient -Family care giver -Medical professionals	Education on potential effects of prescription drugs . Family care givers and medical professionals were trained in the best ways to care for the older population.	Inappropriate prescribing from doctors and substance abuse began gradually decreasing and was significant in several studies but overall results were inconclusive.
<b>Motivational Interviewing</b>	Motivational interviewing was used to help inspire patients to change their lifestyle.	Results were inconclusive due to small sample size. or a lack of control group.
<b>Cognitive Behavioral Therapy</b> -Age Specific	Behavioral therapy was used to target patient issues and address solutions. Therapy was altered to fit the lifestyle of older adults.	Intervention was significantly successful in several studies especially when therapy was tailored to the needs of older adults.
<b>Regulation Changes</b> -Inter-professional approach	Studies focused on changing medical standards so that doctors, nurses and pharmacists work as a team when prescribing medicine.	With medical teamwork, inappropriate prescribing decreased from 28% to 5%.

## Conclusion

- In order to properly treat older adult s with substance abuse, age-specific intervention is necessary due to several differences between the lifestyles of older and younger adults
- Due to methodological limitations in reviewed articles, further research is required in order to determine most effective intervention strategies.