Older Adults: The hidden faces of addiction?

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Outline

- Older adults: the hidden faces of addiction?
- Is AOD use even relevant in older adults?
- Comorbidity: dual diagnosis in older adults
- Complexity
Older adults: The hidden faces of addiction?

- AOD use in older adults is typically underdiagnosed (Badrakalimuthu et al, 2010).
- There is a substantial discrepancy between the research applied to AOD use in older adults and their younger counterparts.
- Older adults with substance use disorders are a population with characteristics and needs different to their younger counterparts (Seitz et al, 2012).
Older adults: The hidden faces of addiction?

- A 1995 study found only 1% of elderly women with substance use disorders were correctly identified by assessing physicians (Dufour and Miller).
- Badrakalimuthu, Rumball and Wagle’s 2005 audit found 60% of older adults admitted to an acute psychiatric unit had no documentation regarding their drug and alcohol history.
Many general hospital settings do not routinely assess older adults for alcohol, other drug or prescription medication misuse.
Is AOD use even relevant in older adults?

- Woo and Chen (2009) found 26.7% of older adults presenting to a psychiatric emergency service in California had positive urine toxicology screens.

- Blixen, McDougall and Suen’s 2007 study of 101 adults 65 and over discharged from psychiatric hospitals in the US found 38 (37.6%) had a comorbid substance use disorder.

- Blazer and Wu’s (2011) study of 6,289 older adults (65+) in the United States of America found 15.4% with alcohol abuse or dependence symptoms.
ON ICE, AGED 10

SPECIAL REPORT

- Ballarat Health Experts Say Children Seeking Drug Treatment
- One Rehab Bed in Entire Health Region
- The Lasting Poison: A User's Story
- A Mother’s Hope in Treatment
- Research Analysis of the Drug Crisis

Pages 8, 9, 10, 11

400th Netball Game for Bungaree’s Clarke

Sport

Last Chance! Final Days

End of Financial Year Clearance!!!!!!
Is AOD use even relevant in older adults?

Source: www.heraldsun.com.au
Substances Recorded

- Cannabis
- Benzodiazepines
- Alcohol, Benzodiazepines and Opiates
- Alcohol and Other
- Alcohol and Cannabis
- None recorded
- Cannabis
- Alcohol and Opiates
- Alcohol, Benzodiazepines and Opiates
- Alcohol, Benzodiazepines and Others
- Cannabis and Benzodiazepines

Gender
- Male
- Female

Consumers
Comorbidity: Dual diagnosis in older adults

- Research indicates a high degree of comorbid mental health problems in older adults who use AOD (Blixen et al, 1997; Cicero et al, 2012).
- Coulson et al (2014) found an association between depression and heavy drinking in a sample of 514 men 65 and over in Geelong, Victoria.
Comorbidity: Dual diagnosis in older adults

- Dual diagnosis results in poor treatment engagement, higher rates of psychiatric relapse and poorer outcomes (Victorian Government Department of Human Services, 2007).
- Although integrated care for both AOD issues and mental health problems has been indicated to lead to better outcomes, a split in service provision makes this difficult to achieve (Croton, 2005).
Complexity

- Older adults with AOD issues are also likely to have a number of comorbid medical conditions.
- Stigma has been shown to reduce help-seeking behaviour (Rosen, 2008).
- Complexity also hinders efforts at treatment, particularly inpatient programs.
An example of the complex factors involved in dual diagnosis in older adults.

- Mental Illness
- Alcohol & Other Drug Use
- Complex Medical Conditions
- Stigma of Mental Illness and Substance Use
- Social Isolation
- “Adaptive” Substance Use
Future challenges

- Several emerging challenges in older adult dual diagnosis research:
  - Ageing baby boomers.
  - Demographic shift.
  - Contracting pool of taxpayers; expanding group of pension recipients.
  - Extended lifespans: medical advances, the success of harm reduction initiatives such as NSPs and opiate replacement therapies.
  - The “conditioning role” of retirement.
ICE TASKFORCE

ABBOTT: THIS EPIDEMIC IS FAR BEYOND ANYTHING WE HAVE EVER SEEN BEFORE
Future challenges

- Several emerging challenges in adult dual diagnosis research:
  - New and novel substances.
  - The “ice age.”
  - Unknown effects of these substances over time.
  - Binge drinking.
  - Significant polysubstance abuse.
  - Trend of pharmaceutical abuse.
Thank you

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