Substance Use Disorder Linked to Higher COVID-19 Risk
People with substance use disorder (SUD), particularly those with opioid use disorder (OUD) and Black individuals, are at an increased risk of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), according to a recent study coauthored by Nora Volkow, MD, director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA).

Volkow and her coauthors conducted a case-control study of deidentified electronic health records for nearly 73.1 million unique patients, including 12,030 with diagnosed COVID-19.

Patients with an SUD diagnosis within the previous year were significantly more likely (adjusted odds ratio, 8.7) to have been diagnosed with COVID-19 than those without SUD. The association was strongest among those with OUD, followed by those with tobacco use disorder.

Among patients with a recent SUD diagnosis, Black individuals were more than twice as likely as White individuals to have been diagnosed with COVID-19. The racial difference was greatest among people with OUD.

Among patients with COVID-19, those with SUD were more likely to be hospitalized and to die than those without SUD.

Comorbidities associated with a higher risk of severe COVID-19, such as chronic lung diseases, cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes, obesity, and cancer, were more common among patients with SUD than without SUD.

“The lungs and cardiovascular system are often compromised in people with SUD, which may partially explain their heightened susceptibility to COVID-19,” Volkow noted in a statement. “Another contributing factor is the marginalization of people with addiction, which makes it harder for them to access health care services.”

US Drug Use Survey Uncovers Both Promising and Concerning Trends
Among people aged 12 years or older in 2019, 60.1% reported having used a substance during the past month, according to the latest National Survey on Drug Use and Health, compiled by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

The most commonly reported substance used in the past month was alcohol, consumed by 50.8% of survey respondents, followed by tobacco, used by 21.1%. In addition, 13% used an illicit drug.

The proportion of adolescents aged 12 to 17 years who reported consuming alcohol in the past month declined from 17.6% in 2002 to 9.4% in 2019. During that period, past-month cigarette use decreased from 26% to 16.7% among people aged 12 years or older.

Over that same period, reported past-year cocaine use among people aged 12 years or older declined from 2.5% to 2.0%. From 2015 to 2019, reported misuse of prescription pain relievers during the past year among those aged 12 years or older decreased from 4.7% to 3.5%, and past-year misusers of prescription benzodiazepines declined from 2.1% to 1.8%.

However, reported past-year marijuana use increased from 11% in 2002 to 17.5% in 2019 among those aged 12 years or older. Between 2015 and 2019, reported past-year hallucinogen use and methamphetamine use increased among adults aged 26 years or older.

Among people aged 12 years or older, the percentage reporting a past-year substance use disorder remained stable between 2015 and 2019, but the percentage of those aged 12 to 49 years reporting a major depressive episode during the past year had increased since at least 2005.

Rising Rates of ED Visits for Suicidal Ideation, Suicide Attempt
From 2008 to 2017, the rate of emergency department (ED) visits related to suicidal ideation or suicide attempt increased among all age groups 5 years or older, according to a recent report from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ).

Suicide, which ranks among the top 10 US causes of death, is a growing US public health problem, the report noted. The suicide rate in 2017 was 14 per 100,000 population, representing more than 47,000 deaths.

AHRQ’s report used the Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project’s Nationwide Emergency Department Sample to assess trends in the population rate of ED visits linked to suicidal ideation or suicide attempt.

From 2008 to 2017, the rate was higher among people aged 15 to 44 years than it was among 5- to 9-year-old children and adults aged 65 years or older. In 2017, when 1.5 million ED visits involved a suicidal ideation or suicide attempt diagnosis, the rate was highest among those aged 15 to 19 years (952.5 per 100,000 population) and second highest among those aged 20 to 24 years (719.3 per 100,000).

In 2017, individuals younger than 25 years accounted for nearly a third of ED visits related to suicidal ideation or suicide attempt. But they comprised fewer than a fourth of all other ED visits.

Overall, males were more likely than females to present to an ED because of suicidal ideation or a suicide attempt, although females aged 10 to 19 years had higher rates of ED visits for suicidal ideation or suicide attempt, with the highest rate of such visits among females aged 15 to 19 years (1196.9 per 100,000 population).

National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

Having a substance use disorder was linked with a higher risk of coronavirus disease 2019 in a recent study.

Note: Source references are available through embedded hyperlinks in the article text online.