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Short communication

Prevalence and correlates of ever having a substance use problem and substance use recovery status among adults in the United States, 2018

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Highlights

- More than 1 in 10 adults in the United States reported ever having a substance use problem.
- Approximately 75 % of adults who report having a substance use problem, report being in recovery.
- Having a mental health problem was highly prevalent among adults reporting a substance use problem.
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Among adults with a substance use problem, receiving treatment was associated with being in recovery.

Abstract

Background

Expanding access to treatment and recovery services is key to reducing substance use-related harms. Fundamental to expanding such services is better understanding the populations identifying themselves as in recovery. This study uses nationally representative data to estimate prevalence and correlates of recovery in the U.S.

Methods

Data are from the 43,026 adults (aged 18 or older) participating in the 2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. Based on self-reported data, we estimate prevalence of ever having a substance use problem, the percentage in recovery among those with a substance use problem, and a multivariable logistic regression model to explore associations of recovery status with demographic characteristics and lifetime mental health problems. Among adults reporting a substance use problem, we compare prevalence of substance use by recovery status, followed by a multivariable model examining associations between each substance used and being in recovery.

Results

More than 1 in 10 adults (27.5 million) in the U.S. reported ever having a substance use problem, and, among those with a problem, nearly 75 % (20.5 million) reported being in recovery. Reporting lower prevalence of using substances in the past year and having received treatment for their substance use problem were associated with being in recovery. Ever having a mental health problem was highly prevalent among those reporting a substance use problem.

Conclusions

The provision and expansion of substance use treatment services continues to be important to reduce harms related to substance use, especially for those with both substance use and mental health disorders.

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Keywords

Substance use; Recovery; Substance use treatment; Mental health; Alcohol; Illicit drug; Tobacco

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