

POSTER PRESENTATION

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Screening and brief counseling among young adults: comparison of college students, community college students, and persons not in school

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From INEBRIA 12th Congress,
Atlanta, GA, USA. 24-25 September 2015

Background

The objectives are to explore proportions of 4-year and community college freshmen and same-age, non-college peers who 1) saw a physician in the past year; 2) were asked and advised about substance use and other behavioral health risks; and 3) were asked to reduce or stop substance use and change other risky behaviors.

Material and methods

A national probability sample of 10th graders interviewed in 2009 (N= 2,519) was re-interviewed [N=2,140 (84%)] the first year after high school. Questions addressed physician contact and whether physicians asked and counseled subjects about substance use and other behavioral health risks. Chi square tests assessed significance of response variation between groups.

Results

Of respondents, 42% were enrolled in 4-year, 25% in community colleges, and 33% were not enrolled. Students in 4-year and community colleges were more likely than others to have seen a physician in the past year (75%, 73%, 65%). Of those seeing a physician, similar proportions (75%-82%) in each group were asked about their drinking, smoking, and drug use. Students in 4-year and community colleges were less likely to be advised about health risks linked to drinking (45%, 46%, vs. 53%), smoking (45%, 47%, vs. 57%), and using drugs (44%, 46%, vs. 53%). Of 4-year and community college students and

those not enrolled, 15%, 19%, and 28%, respectively, were advised to reduce or stop drinking; 14%, 20%, and 30% smoking; and 14%, 20%, and 26% drug use. Higher percentages were encouraged to exercise, improve their diet, and avoid pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

Conclusions

More physicians should ask and advise emerging adults about substance use risks and to reduce or stop substance use. Advice to reduce or stop drinking is particularly needed, as alcohol is the most used substance in that group and often used in hazardous ways, especially by college students.

Acknowledgements

This research was supported by the Intramural Research Program of the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, and the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI), the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), and Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), with supplemental support from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). Contract # HHSN267200800009C.

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Published: 24 September 2015

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doi:10.1186/1940-0640-10-S2-P7

Cite this article as: Hingson *et al.*: Screening and brief counseling among young adults: comparison of college students, community college students, and persons not in school. *Addiction Science & Clinical Practice* 2015 **10**(Suppl 2):P7.

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