

## Substance Use Disorders in Older Adults

Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services  
Older Adult Advisory Committee  
April 7, 2011

Presented by  
Allegheny HealthChoices, Inc. and  
Community Care Behavioral Health

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### Today's presentation

#### Substance Use Disorders in Older Adults

- Background
- National statistics
- Trends and costs in Allegheny County
- Ongoing work

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## Overview and Background

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### A growing concern...

Approximately 3% of the US population over 50 years old is affected by substance use disorders.

● 500,000 people



This number is projected to increase from 2.8 million to 5.7 million by 2020.

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## Increased health risks

Older adults who abuse alcohol or other drugs are at greater risk for:

Physical and mental health complications

Delirium and memory loss

Falls and fractures

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## Increased health risks

The combined factors of aging and substance use result in increased:

Mortality and suicide

Disability and illness

Hospitalization and nursing home placement

Caregiver stress

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## National statistics

A note on the age cutoff:

Convention in substance use research identifies adults over 49 years of age as "older adults".

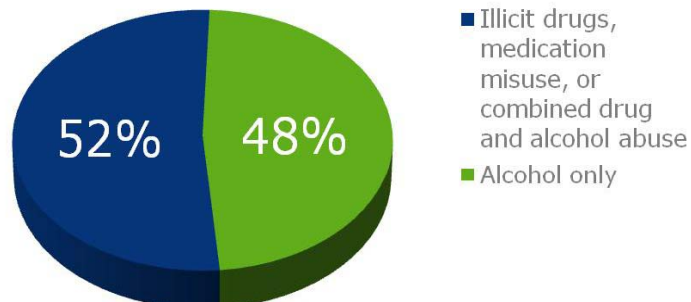
This is because the overall health of this population resembles that of an older population.

In this presentation, "older adult" will refer to a person 50 years old or older.

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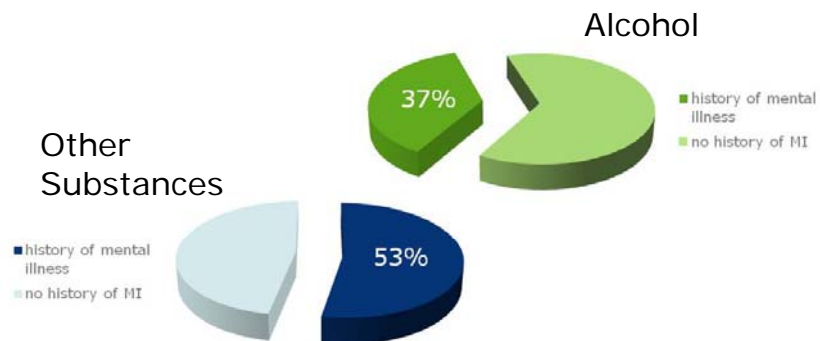
## National statistics

Older adult admissions for substance use treatment in 2003

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## National statistics

Lifetime history of mental illness for substance-using populations



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## Etiology

Among older adults, substance use problems may emerge related to one or more of the following:

- Lifetime history of substance abuse
- Slowing metabolism
- Prescriptions with abuse potential
- Complex multi-drug regimens

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## Etiology

Psychosocial stressors also play a role in the development of substance use disorders.

Economic hardship

Isolation

Loss

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## Etiology

Mental health and cognitive changes are also contributing factors.

Depression and anxiety

Confusion

Forgetfulness

Difficulty concentrating

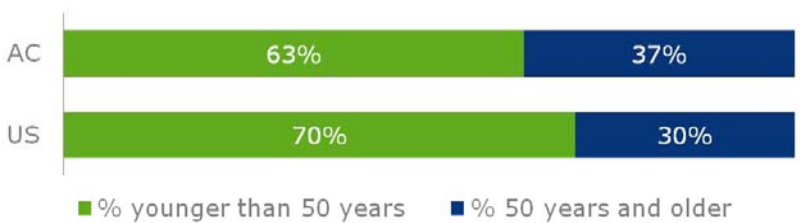
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## Findings: Trends in Allegheny County




### Population

There is a higher density of older adults living in Allegheny County than across the US in general.



| Region | % younger than 50 years | % 50 years and older |
|--------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| AC     | 63%                     | 37%                  |
| US     | 70%                     | 30%                  |



## Study population

The population we studied was limited to:

Adults at least 50 years old who received behavioral health services for the treatment of a substance use disorder funded by Medical Assistance in Allegheny County.

This methodology does not capture people:

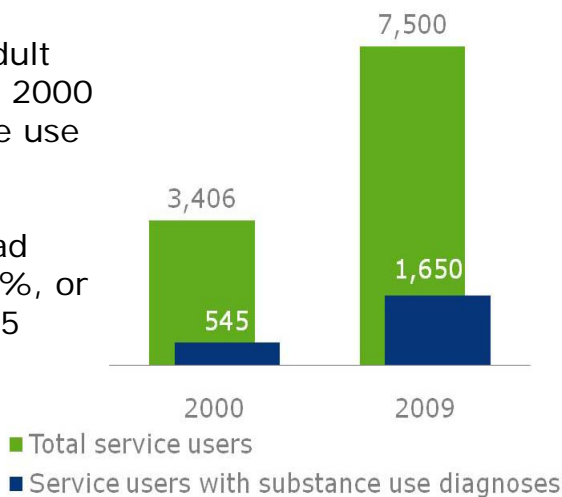
Who are not seeking treatment, or who receive treatment through commercial insurance or Medicare.

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## Findings

16% of older adult service users in 2000 had a substance use diagnosis.

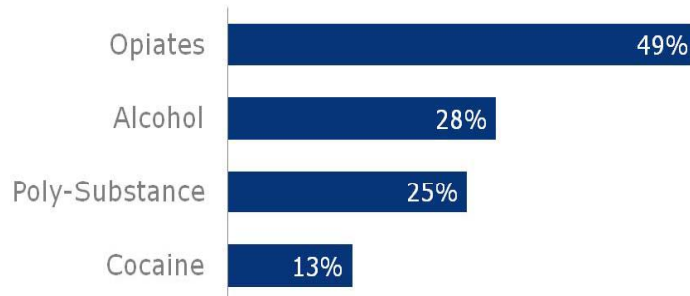
In 2009, this had increased to 22%, or more than 1 in 5 people.



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## Findings

Common substance use disorders for this population include:

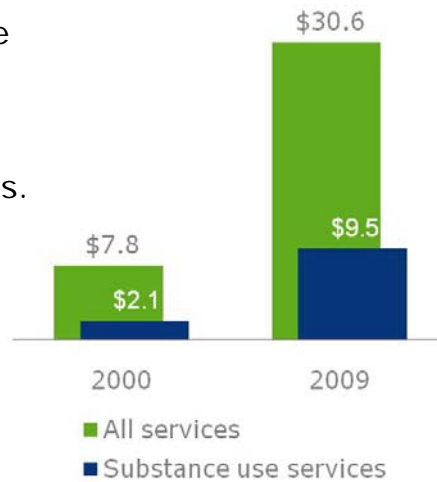


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## Findings

In 2000, substance use services made up 27% of the total cost of behavioral health services for older adults.

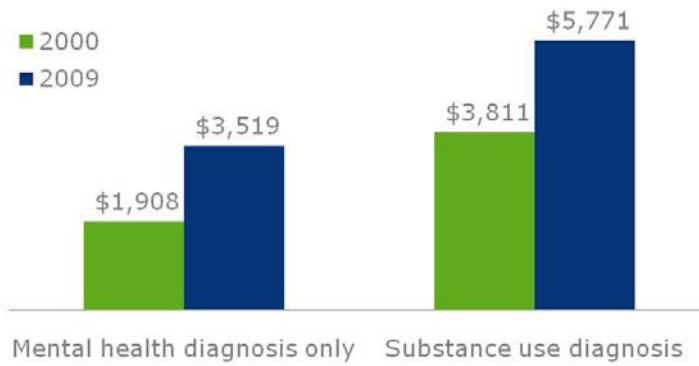
This increased to 31% by 2009.



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## Findings

Average annual cost of treatment for older adults



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## Cost Factors

Drug and alcohol addictions are considered chronic conditions requiring intensive, sometimes long-term, services to support recovery.

Average cost per service user, proportion of diagnostic group 2009

| Service                     | Cost     | Substance Dx | MH Dx only |
|-----------------------------|----------|--------------|------------|
| Non-hospital rehabilitation | \$ 5,588 | 19%          | ----       |
| Methadone maintenance       | \$ 3,379 | 37%          | ----       |
| Outpatient (substance use)  | \$ 827   | 53%          | ----       |
| Outpatient (mental health)  | \$ 519   | 39%          | 66%        |
| Medication checks           | \$ 216   | 38%          | 69%        |

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## Possible Reasons for Growth in Substance Abuse Treatment

- Improved access to services parallels improved access to mental health services
- Very modest funding of substance abuse treatment by Medicaid prior to HealthChoices
- Growth in addiction treatment needs, especially opiate addiction

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Ongoing Work

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## Summary of Activities in Allegheny County

### Improved Consumer Education

Spring Edition of Community Care's Member Newsletter will educate members about the prevalence of substance abuse/misuse in the aging population.

### Analysis of the older adult population in future PH/BH initiatives

Brainstorming about opportunities for PH/BH collaboration specific to older adults at risk for substance abuse/misuse.

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## Summary of Activities cont'd.

### Improved Screening

Community Care is publishing an article in an upcoming Provider Newsletter on this topic.

### Training for Providers

The County and AHCI conducted a training series held Fall 2010 related to the needs of older adults. Conducting follow up training.

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## Summary of activities, cont'd

- **Steps of Hope**  
Enrollment of members with substance dependence into Steps of Hope (tobacco cessation and weight management programs)
- **PH/BH program development**
  - help members (including those with addictions) manage physical health co-morbidity
- **Identification of prescription drug use**
  - for medication assisted treatment programs

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Questions?

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