

National Institute on Drug Abuse:

Role of Substance Abuse Patterns in Clinical and Health Management of HIV in Older Adults

This research will use novel statistical techniques for measuring substance abuse exposure to better capture trajectories of substance abuse over time and to assess their effects on relevant clinical and public health HIV outcomes.

Lead Agency:

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)/National Institutes of Health (NIH)

Agency Mission:

The NIDA mission is to lead the Nation in bringing the power of science to bear on drug abuse and addiction. This charge has two critical components. The first is the strategic support and conduct of research across a broad range of disciplines. The second is ensuring the rapid and effective dissemination and use of the results of that research to significantly improve prevention, treatment and policy as it relates to drug abuse and addiction.

Principal Investigator:

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General Description:

Role of Substance Abuse Patterns in Clinical and Health Management of HIV in Older Adults

The proposed study will measure and analyze substance abuse (alcohol and non-medical use of prescribed psychoactive drugs) over time among HIV positive and negative adults to characterize their distinct trajectory classes. Among those with HIV, the study will examine the role of substance abuse patterns in determining outcomes important to the clinical and health management of HIV in an aging, adult population. These include disease progression, adherence to HIV medication, and mortality. The study will use data accumulated from a large, multi-site prospective cohort study—the Veteran's Aging Cohort Study (VACS)—to derive a better understanding of the influence of substance use and abuse in HIV treatment and care. Analyses will also explore how broader contextual characteristics (e.g., perceived accessibility of one's healthcare provider and neighborhood-level disadvantage) interrelate with patterns of substance abuse and HIV outcomes.

Excellence: What makes this project exceptional?

A key problem with the data emanating from large observational cohort studies of HIV-infected people in the U.S. and Europe, which show an unequivocal relationship between

substance abuse and HIV progression, is the varied definition of substance abuse used in the analyses.

Significance: How is this research relevant to older persons, populations and/or an aging society?

This study is exceptional in that it addresses these limitations using novel statistical techniques to better assess effects of substance abuse across time on health outcomes.

Effectiveness: What is the impact and/or application of this research to older persons?

Results may help clinicians in making treatment decisions about their substance abusing HIV-positive patients and identify those at greatest risk for poor health outcomes. Findings may also suggest areas for more targeted public health prevention and treatment interventions for HIV-positive substance abusers and inform drug, alcohol, mental health, and HIV/AIDS treatment guidelines.

Innovativeness: Why is this research exciting or newsworthy?

This study also makes use of a large existing data set on aging veterans, making the most of extant information and extending knowledge about a high-risk subgroup.