Pragmatic Use of Research in Clinical Care

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Or: “Gee, doc, that’s pretty interesting, but what do I do now?”

(Until further studies provide additional guidance?)

Approaches to EBM & Practice

- Research constrains choice when it's available
- Clinical practice guidelines at lower levels of evidence (consensus of the experts) provide guidance but are less constraining
- Otherwise, we're making it up as we go (within important limits)

General Principles

- ✧Be careful of claims of effectiveness (including your own!) without solid evidence
- ✧There are many roads to the same goal
- ✧Humility and acceptance go a long way
- ✧Do no harm
- ✧Listen to patients and families
- ✧Don’t be afraid to do what makes sense (within professional boundaries)

General Principles

- ✧In MH and SUD, there are many routes to success
  - ✓All antidepressants have about the same efficacy
  - ✓Conceptually different psychotherapies have the same results when applied well (w/ exceptions)
- ✧In general, overall empathy & skill more important than technique or school

General Principles

- ✧RCT not needed for some obvious good ideas
- ✧Performance measurement & quality improvement are essential to good care
- ✧Measure outcomes in each pt continuously
- ✧Examine our own practice (together if possible)
- ✧Examine outcomes *for each provider*

Practice Guidelines

- ✧Bridge from research to practice
- ✧Provide a decision logic tree
- ✧Guidance for clinicians and policymakers
- ✧Allow for deviation depending on individual circumstances
- ✧Constrain choices to only allow deviation when clearly indicated

Better Guidelines

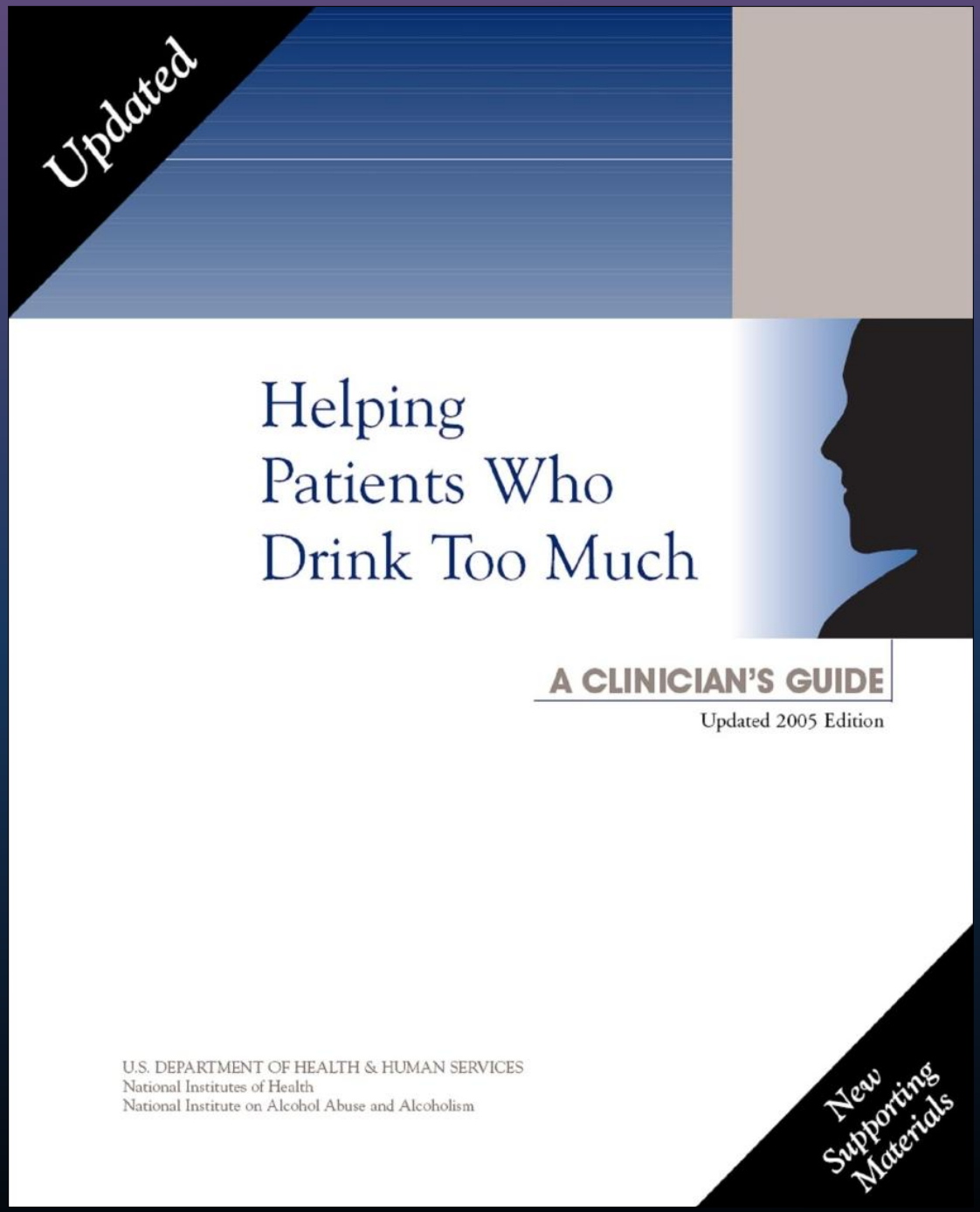
- ✧ are developed using systematic reviews
- ✧ use national or regional guideline development groups
- ✧ include representatives of key disciplines & consumers
- ✧ note explicit links between recommendations and scientific evidence.

» Grimshaw J, Eccles M. et al. “Developing clinically valid practice guidelines,” J Eval Clin Pract 1995;1(1):37-48

NIAAA Clinician's Guide:

Helping Patients Who Drink Too Much

Available at
www.niaaa.nih.gov/guide

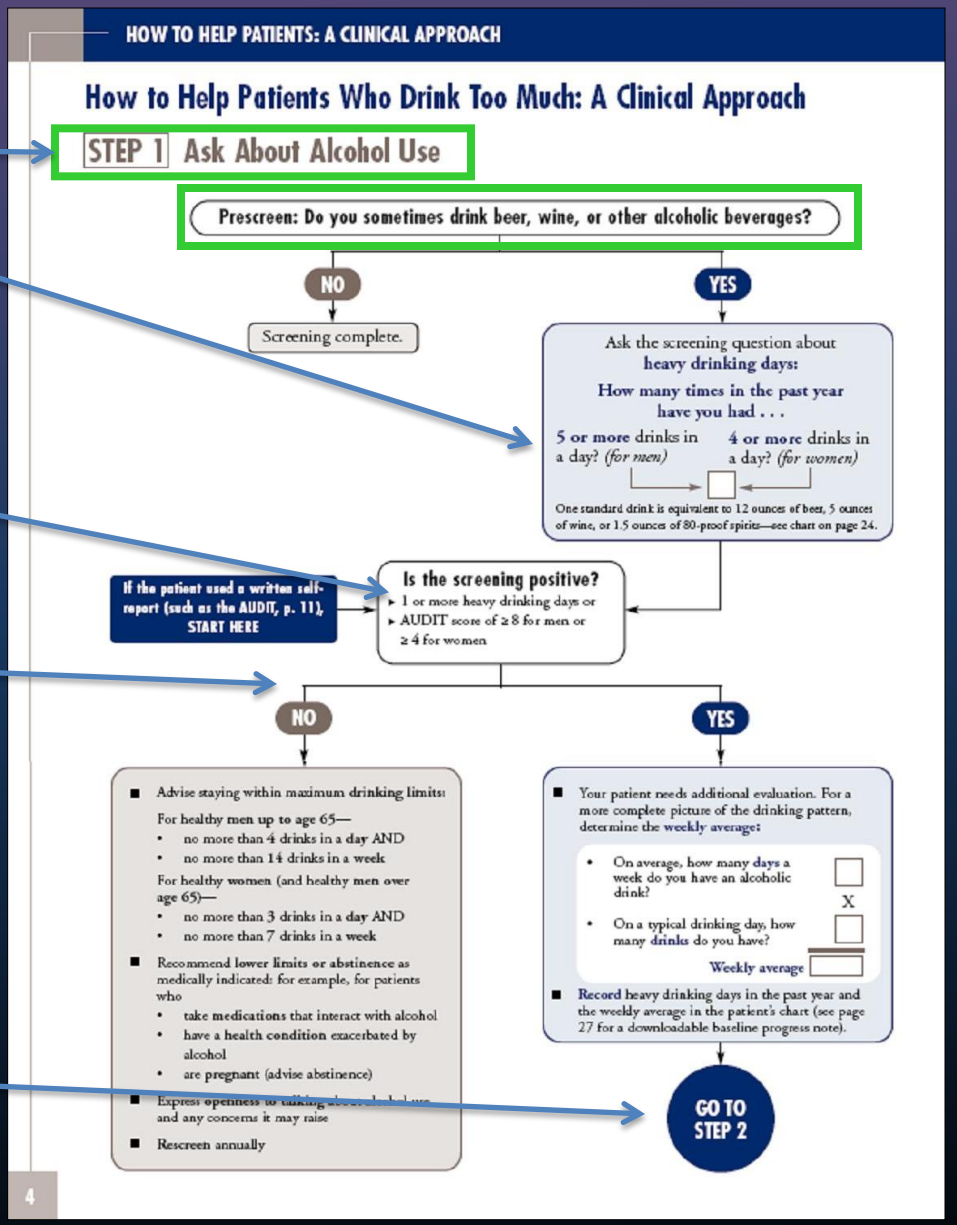


Actions
("Do Boxes")

Questions
("Ask Boxes")

Lines &
Arrows

"Go Boxes"



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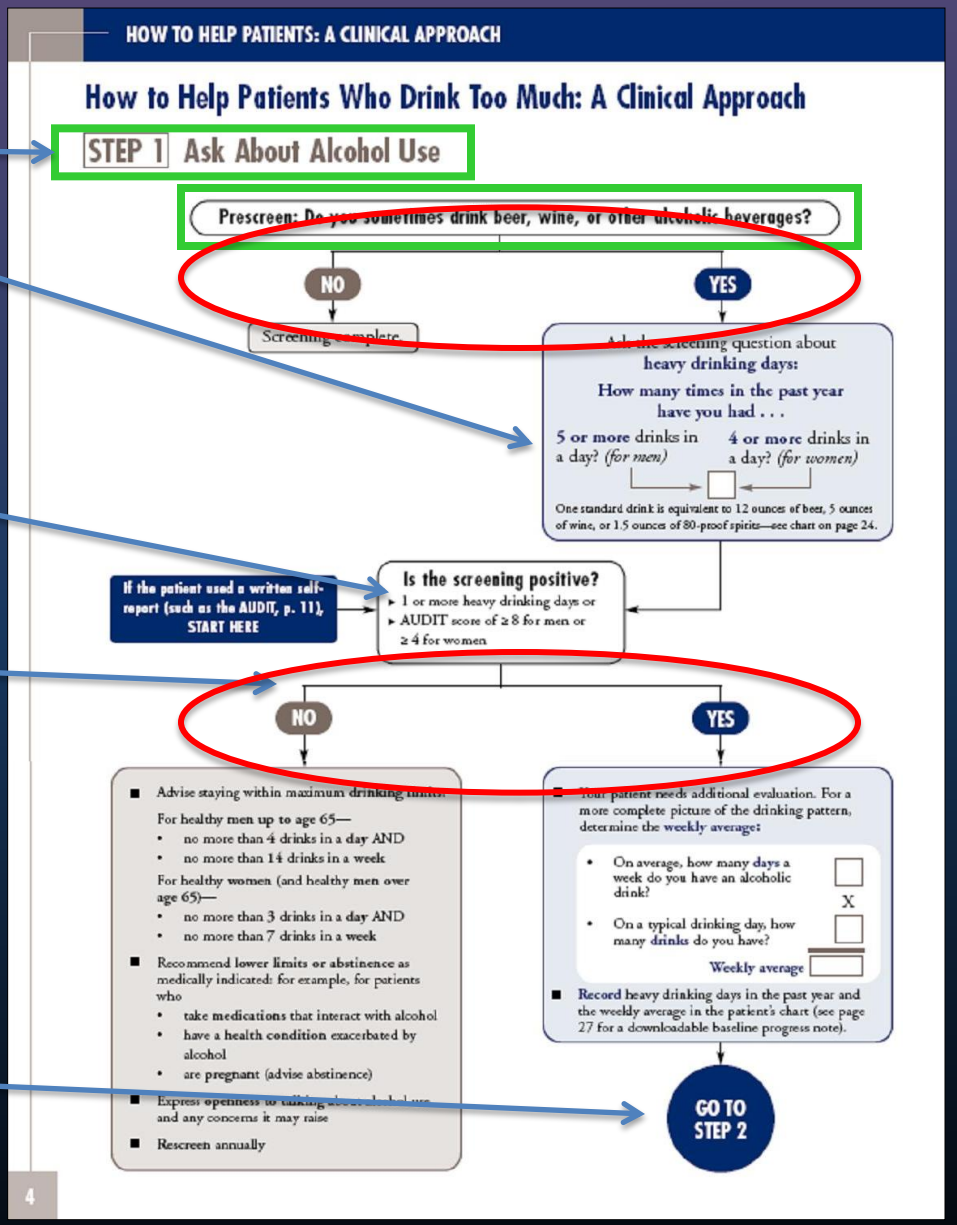

Best Guidelines:
VA/DOD Clinical Practice Guidelines

www.healthquality.va.gov

- ✧Substance Use Disorders
- ✧PTSD
- ✧Depression
- ✧Opioid Treatment of Chronic Pain
- ✧Post-Deployment Health
- ✧Medically Unexplained Symptoms

What Is Evidence?

- ✧What I learned in school
- ✧What I saw on TV or read somewhere
- ✧What my colleagues think
- ✧What the pharmaceutical rep said
- ✧Religious texts
- ✧What the experts tell me

Clinical & Personal Experience vs. Research Studies

- ✧Counterintuitive findings: "Who are you going to believe, me or your lyin' eyes?"
- ✧Mammography
- ✧PSA test for prostate cancer
- ✧Angioplasty for stable angina
- ✧Surgery for herniated lumbar disc

Levels of Evidence

- ✧Level I: Consensus of experts
- ✧Level II: Small clinical trials
- ✧Level III: Large randomized controlled trials (RCTs)
- ✧Meta-analyses

Problems with Evidence-Based Care

- Can't do an RCT for everything
- Typical RCT excludes many complex patients
- Difficult to study for long periods
- Generalizing from one population (e.g. civilians) to others (e.g. military)
- Applying evidence obtained comparing two groups on average to individual patients

On the other hand…

- ✧Margarine (trans-fats)
- ✧Vit E to prevent heart disease
- ✧Vit A to reduce cancer risk
- ✧Estrogen for postmenopausal women
- ✧Added fiber to reduce colon cancer
- ✧Be skeptical of association (correlation) studies!

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Examples of Measures

- ✧Therapeutic alliance at session 3
- ✧Engagement and retention
- ✧End-of-treatment outcomes
- ✧1 month follow up
- ✧Disorder-specific outcomes
  - ✓Symptom rating scales (many available)
  - ✓0-10 scales: Pain, depression, anxiety, sleep
  - ✓For SUD: days using per month, drinks per week

This afternoon

- ✧Track 1: Trauma-Related Caregiving
- ✧Track 2: Child and Adolescent Development
- ✧Track 3: Family Functioning

Thank you!

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Blog: Substance Matters
www.mattsub.blogspot.com