



BACK TO BASICS

A Research Brief from Georgia's Brief Assessment, Screening, Intervention and Continuum of Care System¹

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How does alcohol and drug use vary across age for patients presenting in emergency departments of urban medical centers?

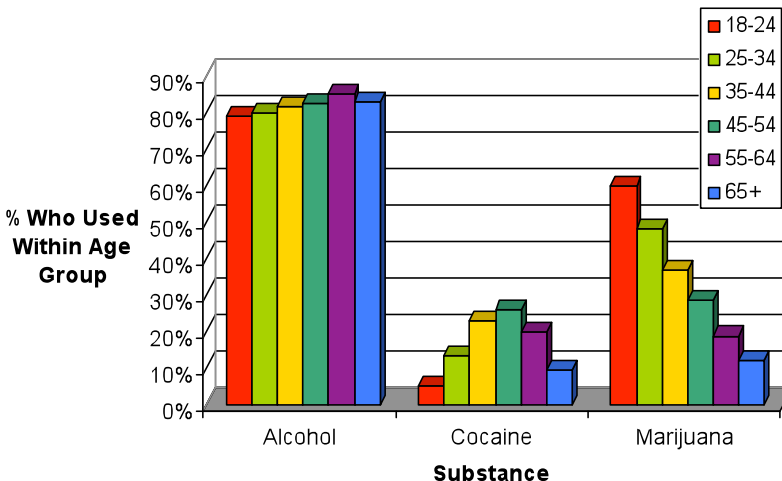
Introduction and Rationale: Alcohol misuse is the leading risk factor for serious injury and the third leading cause of preventable death with an estimate of 75,000 deaths annually. Fifteen to 50% of patients seen in trauma centers and emergency departments arrive with positive blood alcohol content. Admission to an emergency department (ED) provides a chance to identify and intervene with patients who are drinking excessively or who have substance use problems. Understanding patterns of alcohol and substance use in the ED population can enhance planning and delivery of effective treatment.

Sample: 7,810 patients screened for alcohol and drug use at Grady Health System in Atlanta and the Medical Center of Central Georgia in Macon.

Results:

- Alcohol is the most commonly used drug among ED patients – more than 80% of each age group screens positive
- Age does not affect the frequency of alcohol use in ED patients
- Marijuana use, which is less than half as common as alcohol use - is strongly related to age – the younger the patients, the more likely they have used recently
- Cocaine use – which averages about 16% - is most commonly seen in middle aged (aged 35-64) patients.
- Use of other drugs (benzodiazepines, oxycontin, methamphetamines, and hallucinogens) was relatively low, but highest (2-3%) among the youngest patients (18-34). Heroin use was less than 1% for all age groups.

Alcohol and Drug Use, Varying Across Age Groups



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