

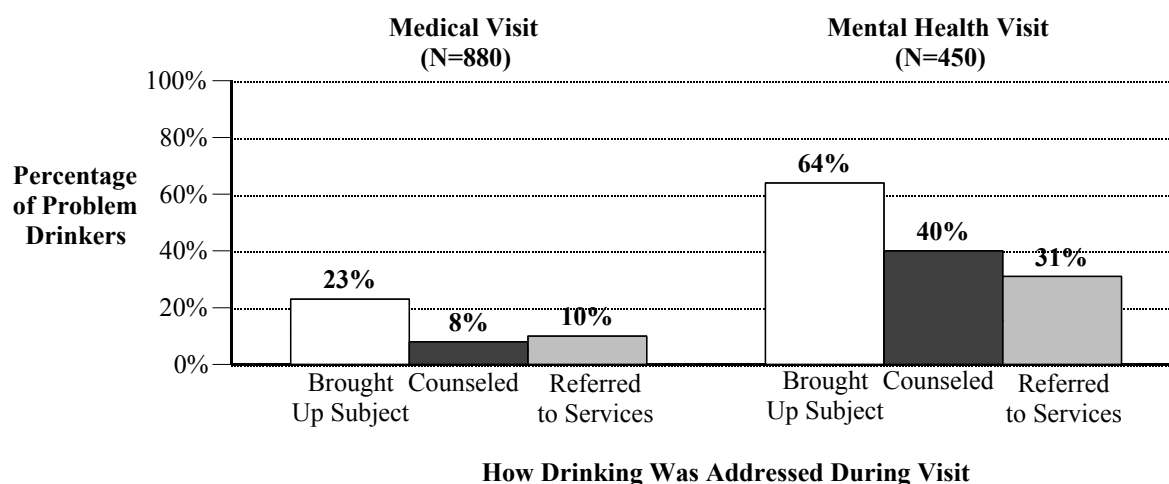
A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

Problem Drinkers More Likely to Have Drinking Addressed During a Mental Health Visit Than a Medical Visit

According to a California study, less than one-fourth (24%) of problem drinkers who had a medical visit in the past year reported that their drinking was addressed during their visit, compared to 65% of problem drinkers who had a mental health visit. During both medical and mental health visits, the way in which the issue of drinking was most frequently addressed was by the service provider bringing up the subject. In-person counseling and referrals to outside services were less likely to occur (see figure below). The authors note that identifying problem drinkers in “medical and psychiatric settings could ensure that many of their problems were addressed before they become more severe” as well as “greatly increase the number of individuals who have access to an intervention and are referred to specialty treatment” (p. 1139).

Percentage of Problem Drinkers Who Had Medical or Mental Health Visits in the Past Year Reporting that Drinking Was Addressed, 1995-1996



NOTE: Problem drinking is defined by meeting at least two of the following criteria for the previous 12 months: (1) drinking five or more drinks in a single day at least once a month for men (three drinks weekly for women); (2) one or more alcohol-related social consequences (from a list of eight); (3) one or more alcohol-dependence symptoms (from a list of nine).

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Weisner C., Matzger H., “Missed Opportunities in Addressing Drinking Behavior in Medical and Mental Health Services,” *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, 17(7):1132-1141, 2003. For more information, contact Constance Weisner at conniew@lppi.ucsf.edu.

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