

A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

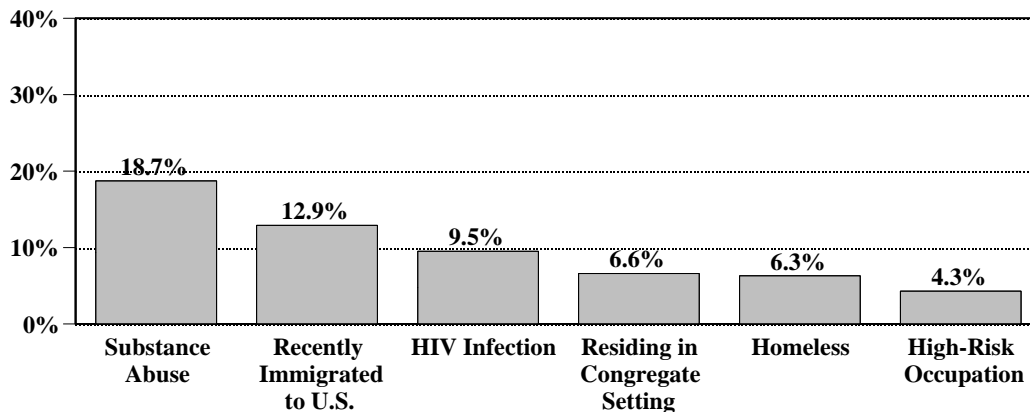
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Substance Abuse Is the Most Commonly Reported Risk Factor Among TB Patients in the U.S.

“Substance abuse is the most commonly reported modifiable behavior impeding TB elimination efforts in the United States,” according to a recent analysis of tuberculosis cases reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) from 1997 to 2006. Nearly one-fifth (18.7%) of TB patients reported substance abuse—either alcohol abuse, noninjection drug use, or injection drug use—in the year before TB diagnosis. Other established TB risk factors reported to a lesser extent by patients included recently immigrating to the U.S. (12.9%), having HIV infection (9.5%), residing in a congregate setting (6.6%), being homeless (6.3%), or having a high-risk occupation, such as a being health care worker, correctional facility employee, or migrant worker (4.3%). The authors suggest multiple reasons for the relationship between substance abuse and TB, including increased likelihood of TB transmission (e.g., substance use often occurs in enclosed spaces with limited ventilation; prolonged use of inhaled or smoked drugs may lead to increased coughing), delayed diagnosis, and difficulty in identifying, screening, and treating at-risk persons. While there are currently no guidelines for the treatment of TB among patients who abuse substances, the CDC has commissioned a working group that is “developing integrated guidelines to provide more comprehensive services for people addicted to substances” (p. 196).

Percentage of U.S. Patients with Tuberculosis Reporting TB Risk Factor, 1997-2006

(N=153,268 TB patients ages 15 and older)



NOTE: The study population consisted of all incident TB cases in persons 15 years or older reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Tuberculosis Surveillance System (NTSS) from all 50 states and the District of Columbia in from 1997 to 2006.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Oeltmann, J.E., Kammerer, S., Pevzner, E.S., Moonan, P.K., “Tuberculosis and Substance Abuse in the United State, 1997-2006,” *Archives of Internal Medicine* 169(2):189-197. For more information, contact Dr. John Oeltmann at jeo3@cdc.gov.

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