



Alcohol and drug risk patterns of patients screened by advanced practice registered nursing (APRN) students

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ABSTRACT

Background: In clinical settings not offering universal alcohol and drug screening, Advanced Practice Registered Nursing students receiving SBIRT training make choices regarding which patients to screen during clinical rotations. Little information is available on risk levels of patients screened by APRN students as they are learning how to perform screening, brief intervention and referral to treatment (SBIRT).

Methods: Within a U.S. SBIRT training consortium, APRN students were required to practice SBIRT with multiple patients in clinical settings. Students completed assessment logs, documenting results of single item alcohol & drug screening questions; AUDIT or DAST responses, if indicated; and brief intervention steps completed.

Results: 113 students provided SBIRT services to 538 patients (mean age 44; SD 15.0; 53.5% female). Positive single question alcohol screens were more frequent than positive single question drug screens (55.3% vs. 25.5%). Mean AUDIT score of patients with positive alcohol screens was 6.5 (range 0-33). Mean DAST score of patients with positive drug screening responses was 1.5 (range 0-10). Using previously validated AUDIT cutpoints, 42.2% of SASQ positive patients were low risk, 42.2% were moderate risk, and 15.6% were high risk. Existing DAST cutpoints classified 57.4% of drug screen-positive patients as low risk, 14.9% as moderate risk, and 27.7% as high risk.

Conclusion: Positive screening rates for patients screened by nursing students were higher than reported rates in most healthcare settings, providing ample opportunities for practicing SBIRT skills. Students encountered many patients with moderate alcohol risk who were likely to benefit from brief intervention. Numerous patients with high risk drug scores may have presented a greater challenge to novice students' SBIRT skills, suggesting a need for clinical supervisors skilled in SBIRT. Overall, students selected patients across the spectrum of alcohol and drug use, providing excellent opportunities for learning SBIRT skills.

BACKGROUND

- In the absence of universal screening, healthcare providers must make choices about which patients are screened.
- APRN students receiving SBIRT training makes these types of choices during their clinical rotations.
- There is little information on the characteristics of patients APRN students select for screening, particularly the alcohol/drug risk level.
- The purpose of this study is to analyze patient assessment logs completed by APRN students to identify the alcohol and drug use patterns of patients selected for screening.

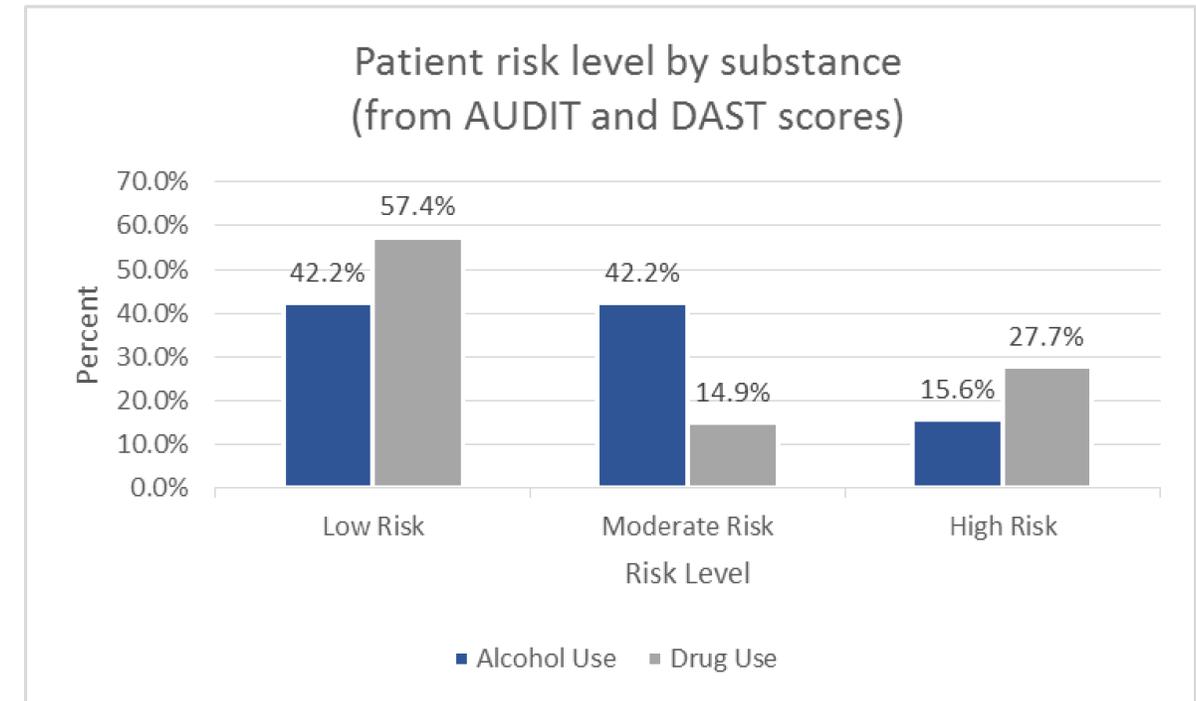
METHODS

Study Sample: Data are derived from assessment logs (n=538) completed by 113 APRN students from 3 APRN programs in the Southeastern U.S. Students completing clinical rotations as part of the APRN program were required to practice SBIRT with multiple patients and complete assessment logs for each.

Measures: Assessment logs included results of single item alcohol and drug screening questions as well as AUDIT and/or DAST scores as appropriate. If a brief intervention was performed, assessment logs captured information on which BI steps were completed as well as the patient's response to the BI.

Outcome: The percentage of patients screening positive on the single item alcohol and drug screening questions, average scores on the AUDIT and DAST, and patients risk level (low risk, moderate risk, etc.) are reported.

RESULTS



- Patients screened were on average about 44 years old and just over half (53.5%) were female.
- Over half (55.3%) of patients screened using the single alcohol screening question were positive, compared to just over 1 in 4 (25.5%) patients screened with the single drug screening question.
- Patients with positive alcohol screens had a mean AUDIT score of 6.5 (range = 0 to 33), while mean DAST scores for those screening positive for drug use was 1.5 (range = 0 to 10)
- As shown in the table above, compared to alcohol users, a higher percentage of drug users screened into the high risk category based on their score on the DAST.

CONCLUSIONS

- Positive screening rates were higher in the patients screened by nursing students than rates found in most healthcare settings where universal screening has been implemented.
- Many of the patients screening positive for at-risk alcohol use were at moderate risk and would likely benefit from a brief intervention.
- Of those screening positive for drug use, over 1 in 4 was high risk which may have challenged students' SBIRT skills. This suggests a need for clinical supervisors skilled in SBIRT
- Students selected patients across the spectrum of alcohol and drug use. This provided excellent SBIRT learning opportunities.