



SUBSTANCE USE HRA

Client Review Document

Overview

The Substance Use HRA asks 8 questions to identify adults, aged 18 to 89, who might benefit from a substance use evaluation in a clinical setting. The substances assessed are tobacco, alcohol, and drugs. This preliminary screening questionnaire is not diagnostic and will only identify a subset of substance users.

Main Scientific Basis

The questions are based on widely accepted assessments. The first four questions pertain to recent bothersome substance use,¹ the next two questions ask about signs of possible substance misuse,² and the final two questions identify users with co-existing mental health diagnoses³ and those who have previously been admitted to treatment for substance use, identifying potential relapse. The questions are:

During the past 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following:

1. Smoking any cigarettes, a cigar, or pipe, or using snuff or chewing tobacco?
2. Drinking at least 4 drinks of any kind of alcohol in a single day?
3. Using painkillers, stimulants, sedatives, or tranquilizer drugs without a doctor's prescription, in greater amounts than prescribed, or for longer than prescribed?
4. Using any of the following recreational/street drugs: Marijuana, cocaine or crack, club drugs, hallucinogens, heroin, inhalants or solvents, methamphetamine?
5. Has anyone ever been concerned about your use of drugs or alcohol?
6. Have you ever tried and failed to control how much or how often you use tobacco, alcohol, or drugs?
7. Have you ever been diagnosed with any of the following mental health conditions: anxiety, depression, other mental health condition, or none of these?
8. Have you ever been admitted to a treatment center for your use of drugs or alcohol?

Product Description

The Substance Use HRA does not directly ask how much or how often people use any of the listed substances. Instead, the HRA assesses how much their recent substance use bothers them. The premise is that people who are bothered by their substance use—regardless of how much/often they use—may be more receptive to a “seek help now” call-to-action.

Individuals who answer “not at all” to questions 1 through 4 regarding bother but who indicate that they’ve previously been treated for alcohol or drugs, have been diagnosed with a mental health condition, have tried and failed to control their use or that someone has been concerned about their substance use are prompted to share this information with a health care provider.

All other individuals are urged to tell a health care provider if things change. This last group may or may not use tobacco, alcohol, or drugs. People in this group may, in fact, be heavy substance users who simply aren’t bothered by their recent use and do not report co-existing conditions or a concerning substance use history. The Results Report includes facts and statistics about substance misuse and urges people who are ready to make a change to get professional help.

Key Result

The key result displayed in the client portal is the recommendation for a clinical evaluation. This result is based on the individuals' answers to the questions noted above. The results are stratified into 4 categories:

- **Get Confidential Help Today**
Includes people who self-reported they are at least slightly bothered by their recent tobacco, alcohol, and/or drug use. These individuals may also report a history of previous treatment for drugs or alcohol, diagnosis of a mental health condition, acquaintance concern or a failed attempt to quit.
- **See a Healthcare Professional**
Includes people who self-reported they are at least slightly bothered by their recent tobacco, alcohol, and/or drug use. These individuals *do not* report a history of previous treatment for drugs or alcohol, diagnosis of a mental health condition, acquaintance concern or a failed attempt to quit.
- **Learn More About Treatment Options**
Result for caregivers completing the assessment on behalf of another person. Includes users reported to have a history of previous treatment for drugs or alcohol, diagnosis of a mental health condition, acquaintance concern or a failed attempt to quit. It does not consider how bothered the user may be by their recent tobacco, alcohol and/or drug use.
- **Tell a Healthcare Provider if Things Change**
Includes people not bothered at all by their recent substance use AND users whose caregiver reported no history of previous treatment for drugs or alcohol, diagnosis of a mental health condition, acquaintance concern or a failed attempt to quit by the user.

Follow-up messaging, emails, and programs can be developed to align with these categories, as well as single data points within the HRA.

References

1. American Psychiatric Association. Online assessment measures. Washington DC, USA: American Psychiatric Association; 2013. DSM-5 Self-Rated Level 1 Cross-Cutting Symptom Measure—Adult. (2013). Domain XIII—Substance Use; questions 21-23. [Accessed March 2024]. Available from https://www.psychiatry.org/File%20Library/Psychiatrists/Practice/DSM/APA_DSM5_Level-1-Measure-Adult.pdf.
2. WHO ASSIST Working Group. The Alcohol, Smoking and Substance Involvement Screening Test (ASSIST): Development, reliability, and feasibility. *Addiction* 2002;97:1183-1194.
3. NIDA. 2022, September 27. Part 1: The Connection Between Substance Use Disorders and Mental Illness. [Accessed March 2024]. Available from <https://nida.nih.gov/publications/research-reports/common-comorbidities-substance-use-disorders/part-1-connection-between-substance-use-disorders-mental-illness>.