Homelessness among alcohol and other drug (AOD) treatment-seekers: Insights from the Patient Pathways National Project

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Prior research findings

• Prevalence of alcohol dependence estimated at 28-48%, and dependence on other drugs estimated at 13-36%, among people experiencing homelessness (Fazel et al., 2008; PLoS Medicine vol. 5, e225).

• Housing instability appears to lead to increased likelihood of alcohol-related problems (although this effect is moderated by level of social support from family) (Murphy, Zemore & Mulia, 2014).

• People experiencing both homelessness and substance use disorder (SUD) are less likely to achieve stable housing within 2 years than homeless people with no SUD Urbanowski et al. (2018).

• Providing housing to chronically homeless people with alcohol-related problems found to lead to increased number of “sober days” and reduced symptoms of severe alcohol dependence over a 2-year period (Collins et al., 2012).
Research questions

• What other factors (e.g. social, clinical) are associated with homelessness among people with SUD?
• Do rates of treatment completion and positive outcomes among people experiencing homelessness differ from clients with stable housing?
• Does AOD treatment also lead to reduced housing instability?
• Do any social, clinical, or treatment factors predict whether people will experience homelessness after completing AOD treatment?
Patient Pathways study

- Recruited 796 clients (404 Victorian, 392 Western Australia) new (past month) treatment entrants in 2012-2013 from 20 services, with a total of 37 sites:
  - 21 outpatient treatment sites
  - 8 inpatient withdrawal units
  - 6 residential rehabilitation/therapeutic community sites
  - 2 supported accommodation sites

- Inclusion criteria:
  - Age 18+
  - Did not participate in same type of treatment within 3 weeks prior to commencing current treatment
Patient Pathways sample characteristics at baseline

- 60% male
- Aged 18-71 (Median age 36 years)
- 81% Australian-born
- 5% Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

Primary drug of concern:

- Alcohol: 45%
- Amphetamines: 18%
- Cannabis: 18%
- Heroin or other opioids: 16%
- Other: 3%
Housing instability and recent homelessness at baseline

• “What type of accommodation do you live in”:

  9% reported being currently either homeless or in unstable accommodation.

• “In the past 90 days have you experienced acute housing problems/homelessness (meaning you had no place of your own to stay so that you had to sleep rough on the streets, or stay at a night shelter or hostel, or sleep on different friends’ floors each night)?”:

  21% reported recent homelessness
Primary drug of concern

Overall p < .001
Overall $p < .001$
Percent who required ambulance, emergency department, or hospital inpatient admission.
Mean scores on the three scales of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (scores can range from 1-7)

- **Significant Other**: Not recently homeless (5) vs. Recently homeless (4)
- **Family**: Not recently homeless (5) vs. Recently homeless (3)
- **Friends**: Not recently homeless (5) vs. Recently homeless (3)

* indicates statistically significant difference.
Multivariate modelling of associations with recent homelessness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Odds ratio</th>
<th>95% confidence interval of odds ratio</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.97-1.003</td>
<td>.092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social support from significant other</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.81-1.02</td>
<td>.119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social support from family</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.77-0.96</td>
<td>.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social support from friends</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.85-1.08</td>
<td>.441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acute/emergency health service use in past 3 months</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>1.39-3.04</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current legal problems</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>1.02-2.27</td>
<td>.038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary drug of concern (overall)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Cannabis vs. alcohol</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.50-1.59</td>
<td>.698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Opioids vs. alcohol</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>1.34-3.54</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Amphetamines vs. alcohol</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>0.93-2.60</td>
<td>.089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Other vs. alcohol</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.11-3.29</td>
<td>.559</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Treatment completion and outcome

- Percentage of recently homeless and not recently homeless individuals
- Completed treatment and reduced or ceased use of primary drug

* statistically significant difference
Increase in rate legal problems among those with recent homelessness at baseline

Percentage of clients experiencing current legal problems at baseline and follow-up

- recently homeless at baseline
- not recently homeless at baseline
What predicts recent homelessness at follow-up?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Odds ratio</th>
<th>95% confidence interval of odds ratio</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recent homelessness at baseline</strong></td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>1.67-4.73</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age at baseline</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>0.97-1.02</td>
<td>.503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time from baseline to follow-up</td>
<td>0.998</td>
<td>0.99-1.001</td>
<td>.164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social support from significant other at baseline</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>0.93-1.26</td>
<td>.282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social support from family at baseline</strong></td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.74-0.98</td>
<td>.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social support from friends at baseline</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.81-1.09</td>
<td>.417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment completed (or still continuing)</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>0.63-1.69</td>
<td>.896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuity in AOD service referral pathway</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>0.88-2.33</td>
<td>.150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current legal problems at baseline</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.40-1.26</td>
<td>.242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary drug of concern (overall)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Cannabis vs. alcohol</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.44-1.65</td>
<td>.635</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Opioids vs. alcohol</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>0.55-2.02</td>
<td>.886</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Amphetamines vs. alcohol</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>0.56-2.15</td>
<td>.796</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Other vs. alcohol</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.02-6.10</td>
<td>.435</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions

• High rate of housing instability and homelessness among AOD treatment-seekers.

• Homelessness in AOD treatment-seekers is most strongly associated with
  – Emergency health service use
  – Legal problems
  – Lack of support from family
  – Opioid use problems

• People experiencing homelessness have high rates of AOD treatment completion and appear to benefit from AOD services, but housing and legal problems remain persistent despite this.

• Lack of support from family is one of the strongest predictors of later homelessness among AOD treatment-seekers.
Acknowledgements, publications, and contact details

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➤ Previous publications of findings from the Pathways study:


• For further information, email joshuag@turningpoint.org.au