

# Association Between Health Status and Access to Treatment in a Sample of Women Recovering from Substance Use Disorders

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## Background

- Women recovering from substance use disorder and their very young children are a vulnerable population in need of supportive services.
- There is limited evidence of whether these women in recovery and their children are receiving needed care.
- Access to care may be influenced by the health status of the mother.

## Objective

- To describe access to physical and mental health, substance use, treatment, and support services according to the self-reported health status of women recovering from substance use disorder.

## Methods

### DESIGN & SAMPLE

- A structured survey was administered in-person and virtually to 50 adult women who were in recovery for substance use disorder.
- Eligibility criteria were: 1) age 18 or older; 2) English-speaking; 3) had a child <5 years old
- Participants were recruited from regional recovery programs and a study flyer was posted on social media.

### SURVEY INSTRUMENT

- The survey gathered information on demographics, physical health status, depression symptoms, current and history of substance use, and recovery and support services.

### ANALYSIS

- The sample was stratified by self-reported good/excellent versus fair/poor health status.
- Health status was based on responses to the question: "How would you rate your overall physical health?" from the Health-Related Quality of Life™ Scale.
- Descriptive statistics and standardized mean differences (SMD) to assess group differences.

## Results

### SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

- Among 50 women surveyed, 30 (60%) aged 30 years old and older and 36 (72%) were white.
- The majority of the sample was unemployed (96%) and lived in a shelter (86%).
- Nearly all received some form of mental health (92%) and substance used disorder (98%) treatment.

### SUBGROUP ANALYSES

- The sample was split nearly halve with good/excellent (n=24; 48%) and fair/poor (n=26; 52%) health status.
- Regardless of health status, a large proportion reported experiencing severe pain (58%).
- A larger percentage of fair/poor health status group reported moderate-to-severe depression than excellent/good health status group (38.5% vs 33.3%).

Figure 1: Pain management and Substance use by health status

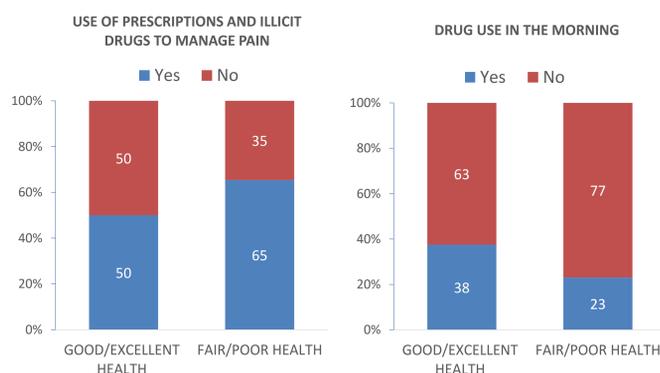


Figure 2: Mental health and treatment by health status

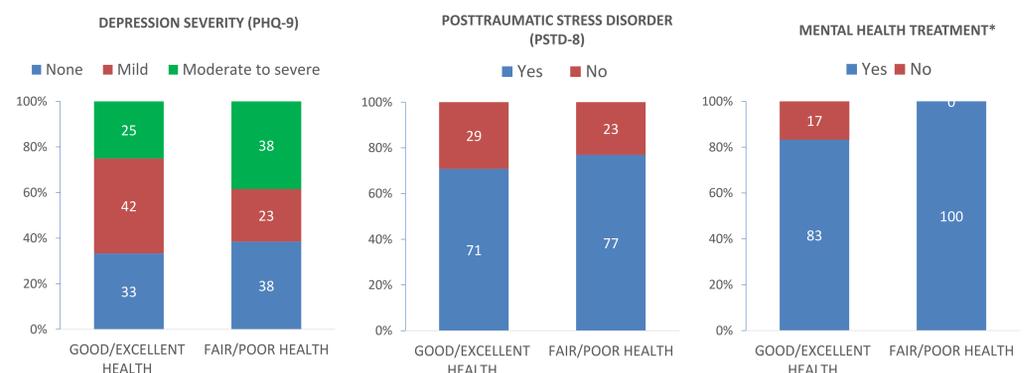


Table 1: Associations between health status and access to treatment

Mental treatment and Recovery Services	Good/Excellent health (N=24)	Fair/Poor health (N=26)	SMD <sup>^</sup>
Used medication for anxiety, depression, or stress	14 (58.3%)	21 (80.8%)	0.50
Received mental health treatment*	20 (83.3%)	26 (100.0%)	0.63
Enrolled in a mental health treatment for depression, anxiety, trauma or other mental health condition	16 (66.7%)	25 (96.2%)	0.82
Participated in peer-to-peer support programs	9 (37.5%)	20 (76.9%)	0.87
Enrolled in a well-being program**	15 (62.5%)	24 (92.3%)	0.76

<sup>^</sup> SMD = standardized mean difference

\*mental health treatment included prescribed medication, therapy, or emergency/hospital visit for mental health concerns

\*\*well-being program included healthy weight; breastfeeding; parenting class, or a home visiting program

## Conclusions

- Women in recovery for substance use disorder who report good/excellent health may benefit from tailored approaches to promote use of mental health treatment.
- Current use of pain medication and illicit drugs, regardless of health status, place women at risk for poor outcomes of substance use recovery.

## Acknowledgments

- We thank the participants for their time and participation in the survey.