Older People’s Drug and Alcohol Project

Ultimate aim to improve the responses of NSW health D&A and mental health services to the needs of older people with substance use issues.

- Alcohol
- Illicit
- Medications
- Tobacco
WHO ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?
# Cohorts (Roche, 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maintainers:</th>
<th>Have continued their previously unproblematic use into older age but age-related changes (metabolic, co-morbidities, other medicines) result in increased harms later in life (Nicholas and Roche, 2014)</th>
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<td>Survivors:</td>
<td>Early onset users who have a long history of substance use problems which persist into older age and often have resultant co-morbidities (Gossop, 2008)</td>
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<td>Reactors:</td>
<td>Late onset users whose problem use begins in their 50s or 60s and is often associated with stressful events (e.g., bereavement, retirement, marital breakdown or social isolation) (Gossop, 2008)</td>
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PROJECT CONTEXT
Factors bringing OPD&A issues increasingly to attention:

- Ageing of the Australian population
- Generational change
- Under-recognition
- Ageing drug treatment populations
Generational change: Illicit drug use in older people

Figure 5.4: Illicit use of any drug(a), people aged 14 or older, by age, 2001 to 2013 (per cent)

Generational change within mental health services

Numbers of unique clients each year with adult ambulatory mental health teams with a drug and alcohol diagnosis, for each 5 year age group, over ten year period

Source: OPDA Project Report (Figure 19)
Ageing treatment populations – opioid pharmacotherapy

Ageing treatment populations within D&A services


Source: OPDA Project Report (Figure 7)
Ageing treatment populations within D&A services, and drug use patterns

‘Principal drug of concern’ for drug and alcohol services closed treatment episodes for clients aged 50+ by year.

Source: OPDA Project Report (Figure 9)
Ageing treatment populations within D&A services, and drug use patterns part 2

‘Principal drug of concern’ for LHD drug and alcohol services 50+ over a ten year period (less alcohol)

Source: OPDA Project Report (Figure 10)
Under-recognition

“research has shown that the oldest groups are the least likely to be asked about alcohol use regardless of the presence of coexisting risk factors”

Duru et al 2002, in OPDA Project Report
WHAT WE FOUND
Key Challenges

- Comorbidities and physical health issues
- Cognition
- Recognition, stigma and ageism
- Pain
- Social isolation
- Accommodation, finances and transport issues
- Relevant resources for older people
- Carers
- Issues with services
A targeted service example

The Older Wiser Lifestyles (OWL) program – Peninsula Health (Victoria)

Preventative / early intervention component

Treatment program component

http://www.olderwiseraod.net/
Positive practice examples in NSW

- **South East Sydney LHD** – aged health, mental health and D&A shared initiatives for clinical practice and for workforce development

- Sub acute care team in **Orange, Western NSW LHD** – complex case management approach, within a hub and spoke model
OPDA Project Recommendations

- NSW Ministry of Health
- Target audiences
- Mental health services
- Researchers
- D&A Services
D&A Service Recommendations

In general, these recommend services

• consider strategies to improve their recognition of and engagement with older people with substance use issues in the context of mixed aged services,

and

• consider some targeted service options for older people.
Mental Health Service Recommendations

In general, these recommend services:

- Increase their awareness of substance use issues in older people
- Provide drug and alcohol screening and brief interventions
- Provide referral to and collaborative care with drug and alcohol services
The resources and where to find them

- Full project report
- Summary report
- Report in Brief
Next steps

- Policy engagement and further policy development
- Informing, supporting and monitoring service development in LHDs
- Workforce development
- Population health strategies
Aged care interface and accommodation issues

NSW study (Lintzeris et al, 2015):

- Older D&A service users identified as experiencing difficulty with ADLs at much younger ages than comparable studies of people accessing geriatric services.

- Few of these people received services assisting with daily living, more than half reported a fall within the past 12 months, and the majority were socially isolated.
Older people with substance use issues in hospital

Hospital separations by year for people 50+ years with a drug and alcohol related diagnosis compared to people 0-49 years, over ten year period

Source: OPDA Project Report (Figure 31)
Older people with substance use issues in hospital – which beds?

2013-14 reporting year hospital separations with a drug and alcohol diagnosis, by age range and bed type

Source: OPDA Project Report (Figure 34)
How you may already be assisting

Community aged care services may have roles to play in:

- harm minimisation,
- supporting activities of daily living, and
- preventing early admission to residential aged care facilities.
Aged care and aged health services: project implications

- Local network development
- Screening
- Recognition
- Joint working
- Referral


Further useful resources and links


- **NCETA Fact Sheets - Grey Matters.** These fact sheets were released in 2014 by NCETA. There are seven fact sheets covering the context and background to the emerging issue of older people with substance use issues, generational changes, prevention and screening, barriers and enablers, common comorbidities, and opioids and pain. There is also an eighth sheet containing references and links. Available from [http://nceta.flinders.edu.au/nceta/resource-kits/](http://nceta.flinders.edu.au/nceta/resource-kits/).

- **Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS).** The Alcohol and Drug Information Centres are state and territory-based services that offer information, advice, referral, intake, assessment and support 24 hours a day. They offer services for individuals, their family and friends, general practitioners, other health professionals and business and community groups. *The ADIS contact details for NSW are 02 9361 8000 (metro) and 1800 422 599 (rural).*

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NSW Health
Further useful resources and links - continued

- **NPS MedicineWise fact sheets.** There is a range of information and resources available on the NPS MedicineWise website relevant to older people and medications. *These can be found at* [http://www.nps.org.au/topics/ages-life-stages/for-individuals/older-people-and-medicines](http://www.nps.org.au/topics/ages-life-stages/for-individuals/older-people-and-medicines).


- **Australian Indigenous Alcohol and Other Drug Knowledge Centre.** This website includes information on the evidence base to reduce harmful AOD use in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It has portals for AOD workers and for communities. [http://www.aodknowledgecentre.net.au/](http://www.aodknowledgecentre.net.au/)