**DUI: Depression Under the Influence? Symptoms of Depression in a Sample of Repeat DUI Offenders**

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**ABSTRACT:** Studies have shown consistently that psychiatric comorbidity is elevated among repeat DUI offenders. However, studies disagree about whether depression, in particular, is higher among these offenders than in the general population. The current study reports on an in-depth examination of symptoms of depression within a repeat DUI offender population.

**INTRODUCTION**

**Background**

- People in treatment for substance use problems often have additional mental health problems (i.e., psychiatric comorbidity) that are undetected and can be barriers to successful treatment (C de Baca, Miller, & Lapham, 2001).
- Among repeat DUI offenders, rates of psychiatric comorbidity are particularly high (e.g., Lapham et al., 2001, 2006; Shaffer et al., 2007).
- In past work, we found that, unlike similar studies (e.g., Lapham et al., 2006), the lifetime rate of depression in our sample of repeat DUI offenders was not significantly higher than the rate for the general population (Shaffer et al., 2007).

**The Present Study:**

To address this surprising finding, we investigated depression within our sample, identifying criteria for depression that differentiate those who qualified for the disorder from others.

**METHODS**

**Participants:**
- 779 repeat DUI offenders, enrolled in a court-mandated inpatient DUI treatment program.

**Materials:**
- The Composite International Diagnostic Interview (CIDI; Kessler et al., 2004), used to assess psychiatric disorders at intake.
- The Screener Depression Questions (SC22, SC23, SC24).

**RESULTS**

- 65% of participants screened into the Depression module from the Screener module.
  - As Figure 1 shows, most of those who screened in endorsed all three Screener items.
  - Among those who screened in, 77% did not receive any kind of depression diagnosis. 18% received a diagnosis of major depression and 5% received a diagnosis of bipolar disorder.

**Figure 1. Endorsement of Screening Questions**

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**Figure 2. Pathway through Depression Module**

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**CONCLUSIONS**

- Most participants who screened into the Depression module did not qualify for depression because they did not meet criteria for duration of depression or dysthymia or persistence of dysthymic symptoms.
- Repeat DUI offenders might possess characteristics (e.g., impulsivity) that cause them to “act out” when faced with depressive symptoms, instead of retreating inwards for long periods of time.
- These results suggest that future research on depression within populations with externalizing behaviors ought to consider potential interactions between internalizing and externalizing symptoms.
- Additionally, the results from this analysis have applications for increasing the sensitivity and specificity of depression screening among DUI offenders.

We are using these results to inform the development of a Computerized Assessment and Referral System (CARS), based on the CIDI, to be used to assess mental health problems among populations in treatment for substance-related problems.

**REFERENCES**