

# Research examines interventions in treating African-Americans with substance abuse

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New research out of the University of Cincinnati reveals a relatively rare look into the success of substance abuse treatment programs for African-Americans. Researchers report that self-motivation could be an important consideration into deciding on the most effective treatment strategy. The study led by Ann Kathleen Burlew, a UC professor of psychology, and LaTrice Montgomery, a UC assistant professor of human services, is published online this week in *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*.

Specifically among African-Americans, the study investigated the effectiveness of Motivational Enhancement Therapy (MET) compared with the standard treatment, Counseling as Usual (CAU).

Motivation Enhancement Therapy – which involves expressing empathy, setting goals, avoiding argumentation and supporting self-efficacy – is designed to address the ambivalence surrounding [substance abuse treatment](#), whether abusers are at the stage where they're ready to live a substance-free life or whether they are still denying the need for any treatment.

The study examined the relation of treatment type and the motivation for treatment to the outcomes of the participants. The researchers found that for participants in Motivational Enhancement Therapy (MET), the substance abusers who were highly motivated to change reported fewer days of substance abuse per week than participants in Counseling As Usual (CAU) programs. However, among the lower-motivated

participants, the Counseling As Usual (CAU) participants reported fewer days of substance abuse over time than participants in Motivational Enhancement Therapy (MET).

The researchers report that the study contributes to the public health need for more empirical evidence on effective substance abuse treatments for African-Americans. The researchers reported finding only two previous readiness-to-change (RTC) studies with African-Americans, completed two decades ago.

The study is a secondary analysis of a clinical trial by the National [Drug Abuse Treatment](#) Clinical Trials Network. The findings focused on 194 African-Americans in five community treatment programs over a 16-week period. Their average age was 37. Approximately one-fourth of the African-American population studied (24.7 percent) was female. The self-reported substance abuse ranged from alcohol (26.3 percent) to cocaine (25.8 percent), marijuana (18 percent), two or more drugs (24.2 percent) or other drugs (5.6 percent) as their primary drug of choice.

The UC research was supported by a grant from the National Institute of Drug Abuse.

Additional researchers on the study are Andrzej Kosinski, associate professor of biostatistics and bioinformatics, Duke University School of Medicine; and Alyssa Forcehimes, assistant professor of psychiatry, University of New Mexico.

**More information:** [psycnet.apa.org/index.cfm?fa=s...  
ID=1&page=1&dbTab=pa](https://psycnet.apa.org/index.cfm?fa=s...ID=1&page=1&dbTab=pa)

Provided by University of Cincinnati

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