

Parity laws for substance use disorders linked to increase in access to treatment

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(Medical Xpress)—A study by researchers at Emory's Rollins School of Public Health suggests that parity legislation can potentially improve access to substance use disorder (SUD) treatment.

Led by Hefei Wen, in the Department of Health Policy and Management at Rollins School of Public Health, the study examined the effect of state-level SUD parity laws that require private [health](#) plans to provide coverage for SUD treatment equal to that for comparable medical/surgical treatment. Findings suggest that the implementation of a SUD parity law between 2000 and 2008 increased the state-level treatment rate by nine percent in all specialty SUD treatment facilities and 15 percent in facilities that accept private insurance.

Complete findings are available in the October 23 online edition of

JAMA Psychiatry at: archpsyc.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=1761269

"We found a positive effect of the implementation of state SUD parity legislation on access to specialty SUD treatment," says Wen. "These positive associations were more pronounced in states with more comprehensive parity laws."

In 2010, an estimated 23 million Americans suffered from a substance use disorder. Only 11 percent of those who needed SUD treatment received specialty SUD treatment for their condition. The passage of the 2008 Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act and the 2010 Affordable Care Act incorporated SUD parity into federal legislation.

"This research suggests that the recent federal parity legislation holds promise for improving access to SUD treatment in this country," explains Wen.

Provided by Emory University

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