

# TAPS tool identifies problem substance use in primary care

September 8 2016

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(HealthDay)—The Tobacco, Alcohol, Prescription medication, and other

Substance use (TAPS) tool can detect clinically relevant problem substance use, especially tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana use disorders, according to a study published online Sept. 6 in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

Jennifer McNeely, M.D., from the New York University School of Medicine in New York City, and colleagues conducted a multisite study within the National Drug Abuse Treatment Clinical Trials Network to compare TAPS with a reference standard measure. Data were included from 2,000 adult patients recruited from clinical waiting areas in five primary care clinics.

The researchers found that similar diagnostic characteristics were seen for interviewer- and self-administered versions of the TAPS tool. For identifying problem use, the TAPS tool had a sensitivity and specificity of 0.93 and 0.87, respectively, for tobacco and 0.74 and 0.79, respectively, for alcohol at a cut-off of 1+. Sensitivity ranged from 0.82 for marijuana to 0.63 for sedatives, and specificity was 0.93 or higher, for problem use of illicit and prescription drugs. Sensitivity was lower for identifying any [substance use disorder](#) at a cut-off of 2+.

"In a diverse population of adult [primary care](#) patients, the TAPS tool detected clinically relevant problem substance use," the authors write. "Although it also may detect tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana use disorders, further refinement is needed before it can be recommended broadly for substance use disorder screening."

Several authors disclosed financial ties to the medical device and medical technology industries.

**More information:** [Full Text \(subscription or payment may be required\)](#)

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Citation: TAPS tool identifies problem substance use in primary care (2016, September 8)  
retrieved 23 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-09-tool-problem-substance-primary.html>

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