Pandemic sets off future wave of worsening mental health issues
28 September 2020, by Laurie Fickman

For instance, those who 'catastrophize' the pandemic amplify the actual stress impact, increasing their symptoms and creating the possibility for substance abuse.

"That sets in motion a future wave of mental health, addiction and worsening health problems in our society. It's not going to go away, even with a vaccination, because the damage is already done. That's why we're going to see people with greater health problems struggling for generations," said Zvolensky.

Zvolensky offers a model of how the COVID-19 stress burden may be associated with addictive problems and health behaviors, and how these may be associated with later chronic illness and psychological problems.

In Psychiatry Research, Zvolensky presents findings linking worry and fear about the pandemic to drug use and abuse.

Zvolensky evaluated a group of 160 participants to find if COVID-19-related worry and fear differed between substance abstainers, pre-COVID-19 users and those who initiated drug use for the first time during the pandemic.

"Results generally suggest the persons using substance experience the highest levels of COVID-19-related worry and fear," said Zvolensky. "Additionally, worry about COVID-19 is related to coping motives for substance use."

These results provide preliminary evidence that COVID-19-related worry and fear may be putative risk factors for substance use initiation in the face of COVID-19, and these results may provide critical clinical information for helping individuals cope with this pandemic," he said.

More information: Andrew H. Rogers et al, Psychological factors associated with substance...

Provided by University of Houston

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