



Prescription Opioid or Benzodiazepine Abuse and Suicidal Ideation in Older Adults

February 22, 2019

News Type: Weekly Spark, Weekly Spark Research

Past-year abuse of prescription benzodiazepine or opioid medication is associated with suicidal ideation among older U.S. adults, according to a recent study.

The study used data from adults 50 years and older participating in the 2015 to 2016 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. Researchers looked at the connection between past-year suicidal ideation and three categories of past-year opioid and benzodiazepine use: (1) no use, (2) use without abuse, and (3) abuse. The analysis revealed an association between past-year suicidal ideation and opioid or benzodiazepine use and abuse. After controlling for a variety of factors known to be associated with suicide, the association between past-year suicidal ideation and opioid or benzodiazepine abuse remained significant, while the association between past-year opioid or benzodiazepine use without abuse did not.

The researchers estimated that past-year prescription opioid abuse is associated with an 84% increase in the odds of suicidal ideation, and past-year prescription benzodiazepine abuse is associated with a 100% increase in the odds of suicidal ideation. They recommended that clinicians screen for suicide risk among older adults who have abused opioids or benzodiazepines in the past year.

Schepis, T. S., Simoni-Wastila, L., & McCabe, S. E. (2018). Prescription opioid and benzodiazepine misuse is associated with suicidal ideation in older adults. *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*, 34(1), 122–129.

Printed on 12/04/2020 from <https://sprc.org/news/prescription-opioid-or-benzodiazepine-abuse-suicidal-ideation-older-adults>