

Podcast

# Drug Monitoring in Behavioral Health and During Times of Crisis

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# Mental health overview

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- Mental Health
- Times of Crisis
- Drug Monitoring

## What are the most common types of mental health disorders?

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Depressive  
Disorders

Schizophrenia  
Spectrum &  
Others

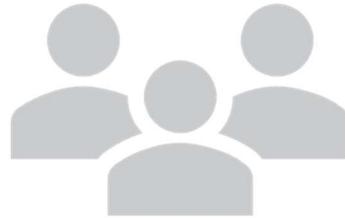
Anxiety  
Disorders

Substance  
and Opioid  
Use disorders

## Prevalence and occurrence

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**1 in 5** Americans (18%) age 18+ **experience some form of mental illness**<sup>1</sup>



**20M** People (8.4%) in the past year **had substance use disorders**<sup>1</sup>



**8.1%** American adults age 20+ **had depression in a given 2-week period**

**7.9M** Of these people had **BOTH mental disorders & SUDs**<sup>1</sup>

- Mental disorders begin and occur at different stages in life and are more prevalent in certain age groups
- Schizophrenia and other disorders usually emerge in early adulthood

## Mental health disorders may occur

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**ONCE**

Reoccur  
**INTERMITTENTLY**

**CHRONICALLY**

# Medication adherence and the role of Clinical Drug Testing

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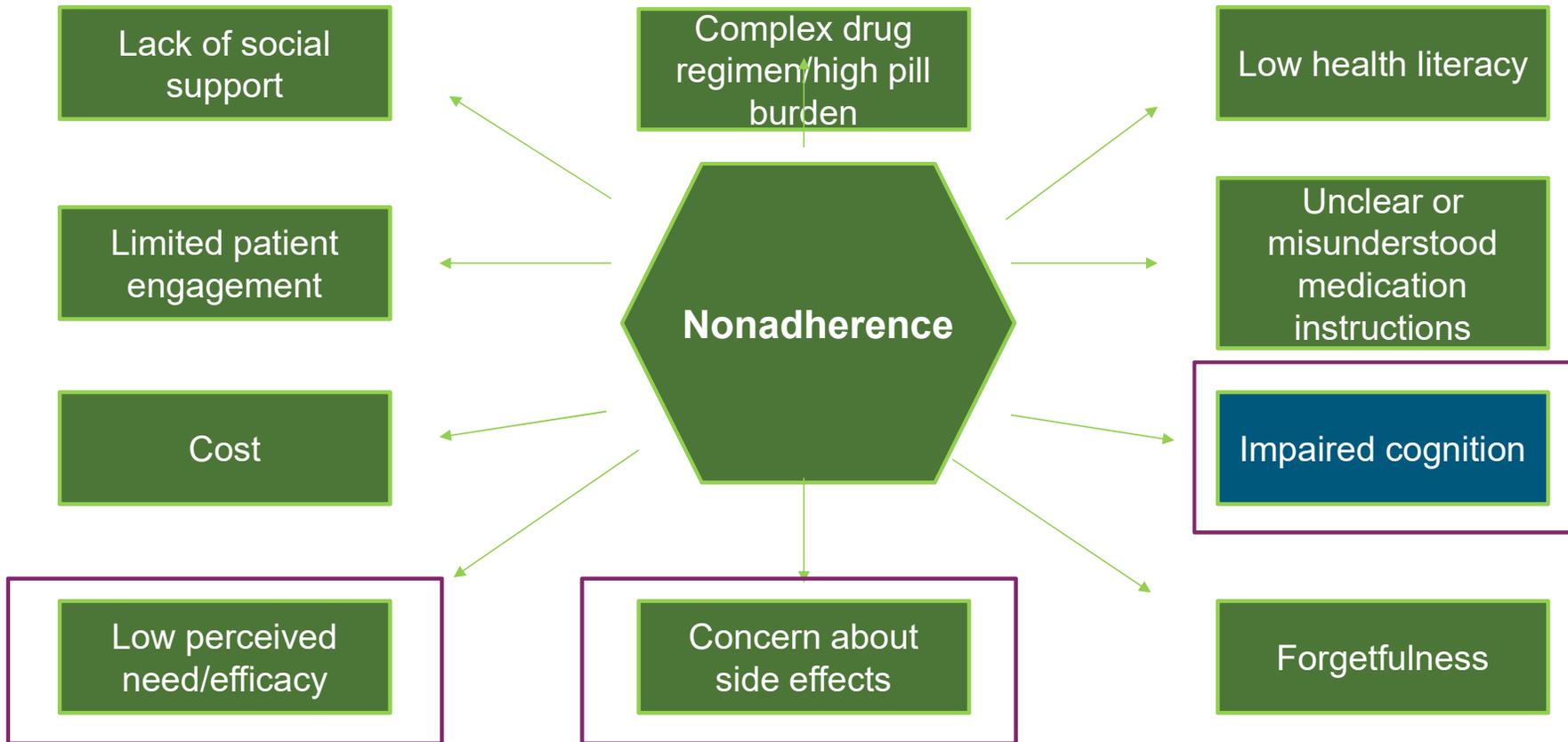
- **Medication Adherence is defined as the extent to which a person's medication-consuming behaviors follow the recommendations of a health care provider.<sup>2</sup>**
- Medication nonadherence is what undermines the pharmacotherapy process and ultimately the efficacy of treatment. And it's not just simply forgetting to take your medication.
- **Nonadherence** also applies to the misuse of medications such as timing and dosing.
- In addition, medication adherence also encompasses the dangers of **mixing** unreported substances with prescribed substances as this can lead to side effects and potential overdose syndromes.
- It is estimated that nonadherence to long-term therapy for chronic illness is as high as **50%.**<sup>3,4</sup>

## Medication adherence and the role of Clinical Drug Testing (continued)

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- Published studies show that nonadherence rates for antidepressants and antipsychotics range from 50%-55%.<sup>5</sup>
- Unfavorable outcomes associated with noncompliance<sup>6</sup>
  - Worsening of symptoms
  - Increased risk of relapse
  - Personal suffering
  - Rehospitalization
  - Suicide attempt
  - Increased cost
  - Disrupted recovery

# What challenges adherence?<sup>7</sup>



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What about during times of crisis?

## What about during times of crisis?

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Do mental health issues increase?



Does the prescribing of mental health medications increase?



Does the frequency of drug monitoring increase during challenging times?

## Mental Health is challenged during times of crisis

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What are some examples of challenging times at the population level?

1. Natural Disasters
2. Economic Crisis
3. Pandemic

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**Has drug misuse been shown to increase during times of crisis?**

# Drug Misuse Increases During Times of Crisis

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- **Natural Disasters**

- Psychological disorders and substance misuse increase in the aftermath of both man-made and natural disasters:
- In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, **“survivors were smoking cigarettes, consuming alcohol, and experiencing alcohol consumption-related problems at a substantially higher rate,”** according to a 2006 study by researchers at the University of South Carolina.<sup>8</sup>
- Data showed **hospitalizations for alcohol misuse rose 35% following Hurricane Katrina.**<sup>8</sup>

- **Economic Crisis**

- During economic recessions, **deteriorations in mental health** and **increases in suicides** are observed at a population level.<sup>9</sup>
- Both of these outcomes are associated with **illegal drug use.**<sup>9</sup>
- Evidence shows that drug use increases in times of recession because unemployment increases **psychological distress and social detachment.**<sup>9</sup>
- **Social exclusion mechanism: An economic recession leads to job loss which may lead to loss of social status and to social exclusion, which may be coped with by using an illegal drug.**<sup>9</sup>

During the pandemic, patients with chronic pain, substance use disorders, and mental health conditions are at particular risk for alcohol and drug overuse and misuse

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Drug testing, as well as other preventive services, have in many cases been put on hold during the COVID-19 pandemic

### The epidemic with the pandemic...

#### Impact of the pandemic on patients

- Uncertainty about the coronavirus, concerns about family members and finances, isolation and disruptions to daily life are leading to increased anxiety and depression
  - These events can **increase the risk of substance abuse, such as extensive drinking or drug use, as a coping mechanism<sup>2</sup>**
  - The risk for substance misuse is likely to vary based on predisposing factors

#### Important risk factors to consider

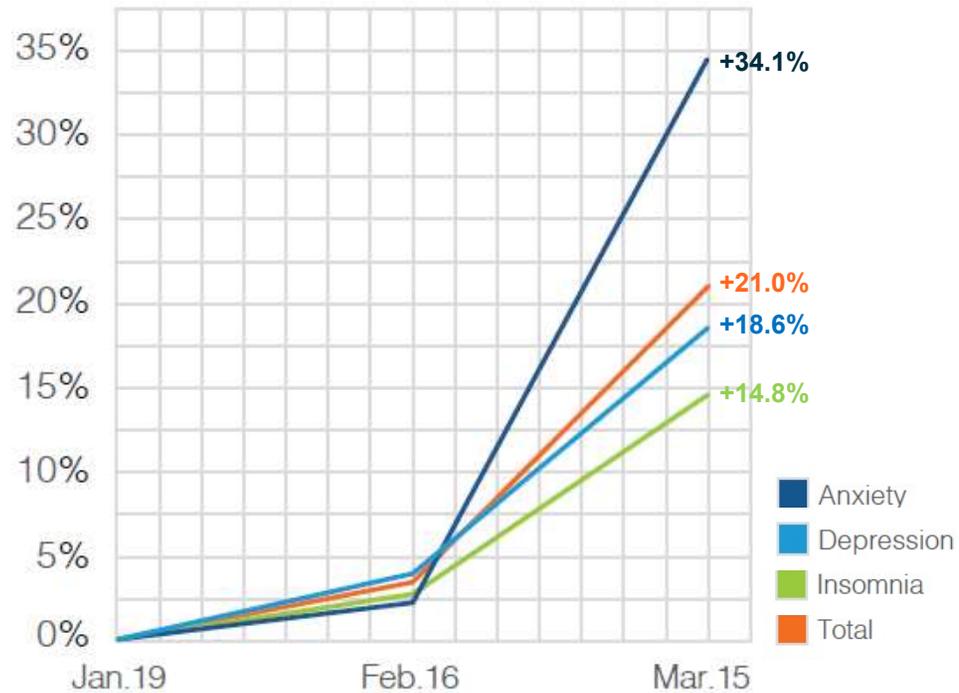
- Clinicians who treat patients with chronic pain, substance use disorders, or mental health conditions need to understand their patient's history and previous diagnosis:
  - Personal history of substance misuse
  - Family history of substance misuse
  - Previous diagnosis of anxiety, depression, or bipolar disorders

**Routine drug monitoring services can play a critical role in managing care**

# COVID-19 has impacted prescriptions for mental health treatment

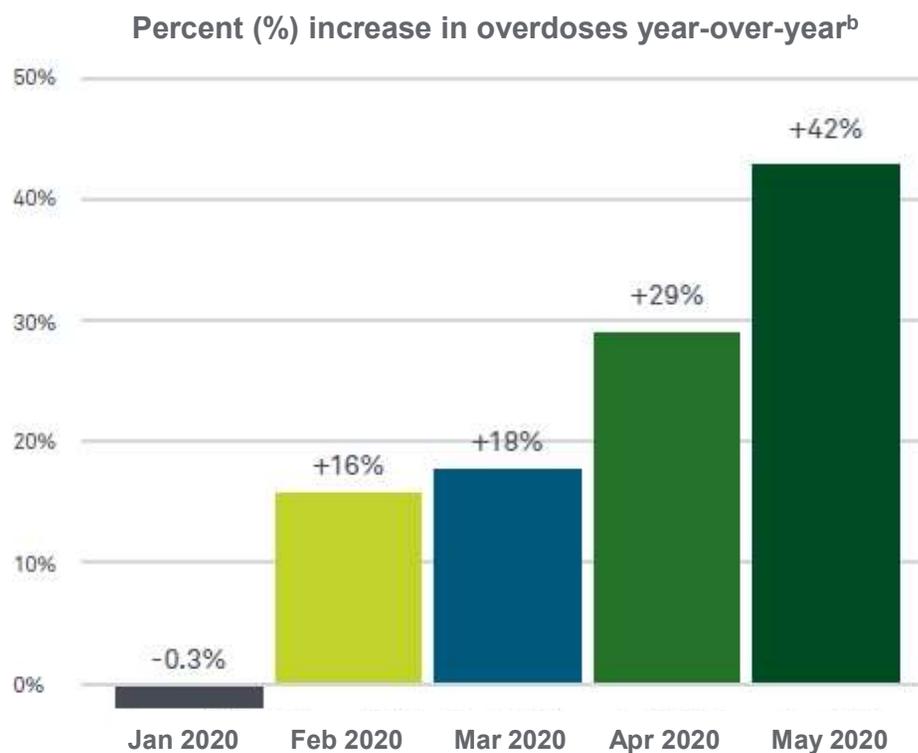
Anxiety and depression related to COVID-19 may persist after the pandemic subsides. There has been a significant rise in the use of antidepressants and other medications for mental health disorders

Percent Change in Prescriptions filled per week for mental health medications<sup>10</sup>



## Monthly overdoses have grown dramatically during the pandemic

Overdoses<sup>a</sup> increased up to 42% per month during the pandemic, as compared to the same months in 2019<sup>11</sup>



a. Suspected overdoses nationally—not all fatal

b. Percent increase references the 1,201 agencies reporting to ODMAP by January 2019. Source: ODMAP

## Look at what data shows!

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- Quest Clinical drug monitoring declined rapidly during the COVID-19 stay-at-home orders.<sup>12</sup>
- However, Positivity for non-prescribed fentanyl increased (by 35%;  $p < 0.01$ ) compared to the baseline period.<sup>12</sup>
- Significant increases in positivity were also demonstrated for heroin (44%,  $p < 0.01$ ), opiates (10%,  $p < 0.01$ ), and marijuana (4%,  $p < 0.01$ ).<sup>12</sup>
- The combination of nonprescribed fentanyl with other drugs also increased, including positivity for nonprescribed fentanyl increases by 89% among patients positive for amphetamines ( $p < 0.01$ ); 48% for benzodiazepines ( $p < 0.01$ ); 34% for cocaine ( $p < 0.01$ ); 39% for opiates ( $p < 0.01$ ); and 4% for heroin.<sup>12</sup>

# Medication adherence and the role of Clinical Drug Testing

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- Note that monitoring the dispensing of buprenorphine is only part of the picture. Just because a medication is dispensed doesn't mean it is consumed appropriately.
- During this COVID-19 pandemic, medication adherence is more important than ever. Social distancing IS a risk factor for nonadherence.
- Drug testing provides objective information on medication compliance, empowering behavioral health clinicians and treatment teams to make more informed decisions that can improve patient care.
- Quest uses a 2-step testing approach with presumptive identification of possible use or non-use of the tested drugs and definitive confirmation to identify specific drugs present.
- Our accurate results help clinicians and treatment teams facilitate conversations and maintain therapeutic alliances with patients and clients.

# Delivering Peace of Mind at our PSCs

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When in-office collection is not an option for you the provider, or for your patient

- Special hours for vulnerable patients
- Safeguarding patient health with employee masks and PPE
- All patients are required to wear a mask or face covering
- Social distancing
- More frequent cleaning
- Wait by Text program



**The Quest Diagnostics Clinical Drug Monitoring team is pleased to announce that we are now offering providers the ability to order 'at-home' or 'self-collection' of drug monitoring test samples, as part of or in conjunction with physician/patient Telemedicine sessions**

# New, at-home/self-collection offering from Quest Diagnostics Clinical Drug Monitoring

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When in-office collection is not an option for you the provider, or for your patient



- Explain the new Quest “at-home” collection option to your patient
- Submit your test order using your Quest Quantum® Lab Services Manager account or your EMR
- Be sure to use the Home Collect test code (#39654–Oral Fluid, or #39557–Urine) and include the patient contact information as well as drug monitoring test(s) ordered
- Patients will receive a self-collection package delivered to their homes with collection materials, specific instructions on collecting the sample, as well as packing and shipping instructions for return of the sample
- A self-collection demonstration video is available at [QuestDrugMonitoring.com/resources](https://www.questdiagnostics.com/questdrugmonitoring/resources)

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