

## *Alcohol Abuse/Dependence Data for the US Population*

- Lifetime prevalence of alcohol abuse/dependence is 13.8%; one out of every seven persons meets the criteria sometime in his/her life
- Lifetime prevalence rates are:
  - 23.8% for males
  - 4.6% for females
- Male to female ratio is 5 to 1

## *Nicotine/Tobacco Use/Abuse*

- Sixty-two million Americans are current smokers
  - approximately 29% for individuals age 12 and older
- Approximately seven million Americans are current users of smokeless tobacco

## *Psychotherapeutic Drugs/ Prescription Drugs*

- Women more likely to use socially acceptable drugs
- Most common drugs abused:
  - benzodiazepines
  - Vicodin
  - Fiorinal
  - caffeine
  - aspirin
- Majority of women using prescription drugs are middle-aged
- Psychological and physiologic stressors may increase risk

## *Illicit Drugs*

- Thirteen million Americans report current use of illicit drugs (in the past month)
- Marijuana is the most commonly used illicit drug among drug users
- Several longitudinal studies of both genders found a strong correlation between increasing marijuana use and use of other illicit drugs

## *Medical Settings*

- Approximately 20.3% of new patients in ambulatory medical care settings have problems with substance abuse (Babor, 1990)
- Relationship of substance abuse and the need for medical services is well documented
- Alcohol use is involved in:
  - 44% of fatal crashes
  - 47% of drownings
  - 38% of fires
  - 34% of falls

# *Substance Use/Abuse in Population Cohorts*

- Pregnancy and alcohol
- Women in the criminal justice system
- Homeless women
- Lesbian women
- Women with disabilities

*Substance Use/Abuse  
in  
Ethnic Minorities*

African-American women

Native-American women

Asian/Pacific-Islander women

Hispanic/Latina women

## *Correlates of Substance Use in Women*

- Age
- Employment
- Role deprivation
- Marital status

## *Risk Factors Among Younger Women*

- Role-related issues
  - college-age women drink more often and more heavily during college
  - marital status associated with drinking
  - husband's drinking may influence wife's drinking
- Health-related issues
  - reproductive disorders
  - symptoms indicative of problem drinking such as gastric difficulties, insomnia, and depression

## *Alcohol-Related Problems Among Middle-Aged Women*

- Impulse control problems
- Drinking and driving
- Use of other drugs
- Potential fetal damage
- Problems in the workplace
- Assaults and other violent experiences
- Suicide attempts

## *Risk Factors Among Middle-Aged Women*

- "Empty-nest" syndrome
- Feelings of abandonment
- Break-up of a marriage or long-term relationship
- Failure to adapt to aging
- Heavy spousal drinking
- Solitary "at home" drinking patterns
- Presence of co-morbid psychiatric disorder

## *Risk Factors Among Older Women*

- Depression
- Widowhood
- Retirement
- Moving to retirement communities
- Spousal drinking
- Use of psychoactive drugs

## *Alcohol-Related Problems Among Middle-Aged Women*

- Associated with loss of parenting and spousal roles
- Precipitants related to problem drinking include:
  - loneliness
  - general unhappiness
  - long-term marital conflict
  - stressful life events

## *Alcohol-Related Problems Among Older Women*

- A large proportion report recent onset (within the past 10 years) of problem drinking
- Recently widowed elderly women are at greater risk for problem drinking

## *Social and Environmental Factors*

- Influence of partner's drinking
- Depression
- Alcohol and sexual behavior
- Relationship violence