

TITLE: The impact of past treatment-seeking behaviors on substance use outcomes for patients receiving brief interventions

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Introduction: Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) is a brief intervention that uses motivational interviewing to provoke substance use reductions in individuals classified as harmful users (Babor et al, 2007). While a large body of research supports SBIRT efficacy for non-dependent harmful substance use, such as binge drinking, some point out SBIRT's lack of efficacy for dependent users (Saitz, 2013). Other research suggests that previous engagement in substance use services predicts better outcomes in subsequent treatments (Yang, 1999). This study examines the effect of previous treatment seeking behavior on substance use outcomes for SBIRT patients classified as needing more intensive services.

Method: Emergency room patients completed the Alcohol, Smoking, and Substance Involvement Screening Test (ASSIST) and received an intervention based on their risk for experiencing consequences due to their substance use. We restricted the sample to the highest scoring group, referral to treatment patients (RT), with 6-month follow-up data ($n= 127$). Treatment-seeking behavior in this context is defined as endorsement of seeking treatment in the 6 months prior to the initial screen. Using a paired-samples t-test, we compared substance use scores at baseline and 6-month follow-up for the treatment seeking and non-treatment seeking groups. We used multiple regression to test if treatment seeking behavior predicted substance use score at follow up.

Results: At 6 month follow-up, both the treatment seeking group ($M= 16.2$, $SD= 10.8$) and the non-treatment seeking group ($M= 16$, $SD= 11.5$) significantly reduced their maximum ASSIST score. There was a non-significant effect of treatment seeking on substance use score at follow up, $B= -1.36$, $t(126)= -1.03$, $p = n.s.$

Discussion/Conclusion: These results suggest that past treatment seeking behaviors has little impact on the effectiveness of SBIRT. Still, these results support the assertion that a brief intervention can have a lasting impact on substance use outcomes for patients in the higher scoring range.