Homelessness Across the Lifespan: Clinical Approaches, Prediction, and Prevention

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Psychiatry
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Boston Health Care for the Homeless Street Team
Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program

- Provides care to 11,000 homeless individuals in 45 clinical sites, including street and shelter-based care
- Offers mental health, medical, dental, eye, and respite services
- Integrated care model unites peer specialists, case managers, social workers, nurses, NPs, PAs & physicians
A Framework to Prevent Suffering on the Street

Koh, Roncarati, O’Connell. JAMA IM. 2021.
Homeless $\rightarrow$ Housing $\rightarrow$ Improved Outcomes $\rightarrow$ Homeless
Homelessness Prevention: A Framework

**Individual Level Determinants**
- Adverse childhood experiences
- Poverty
- Poor social support
- Mental illness
- Substance use disorder

**Community Level Determinants**
- Housing market factors
- Economic conditions
- Racism/discrimination
- Safety net
- Climate

**High Risk Transition Points**
- Children leaving foster care
- People leaving jails/prisons
- Soldiers leaving army

**Housing**
- Housing First
- Rapid rehousing
- Rent subsidies

Key question: Can homelessness among U.S. army veterans be predicted with accuracy based on data collected during their time of military service?
Results and Next Steps

- A prediction model for homelessness can accurately target soldiers for preventive intervention before transition to civilian life.

- Indicators of mental health emerged as most important predictors, as well as certain lifetime traumas and adverse life experiences.

- Next steps: designing, implementing, and evaluating a preventive intervention for high-risk soldiers transitioning to civilian life.

High Risk Transition Points

Childhood  | Soldiers leaving army  | INTERVENTION  | Homeless  | Housing

Transitional Age Youth Experiencing Homelessness

Colin W. Burke, MD
Background

- Clinical and Research pathway
- MGH, Harvard Medical School, and K12 Research
- Academic-Community Partnership
Background

- **Team:**
  - Timothy Wilens, MD
  - Peter Ducharme, MSW
  - Sylvia Lanni, BA
  - Shaye Firmin, BA
  - Maura DiSalvo, MPH
Systematic review: Rates of psychopathology, substance misuse, and neuropsychological dysfunction among transitional age youth experiencing homelessness

Colin W. Burke MD | Elizabeth S. Firmin BA | Timothy E. Wilens MD

TABLE 2: Comparison of TAY-EH psychopathology/SUD rates with population means

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disorder</th>
<th>TAY-EH</th>
<th>Population mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major Depressive Disorder</td>
<td>31%-95%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bipolar Disorder</td>
<td>22%-50%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety Disorders</td>
<td>23%-51%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTSD</td>
<td>21%-80%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADHD</td>
<td>30%-56%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol Use Disorder</td>
<td>13%-50%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Abbreviations: SUD, substance use disorders; TAY-EH, Transitional age youth experiencing homelessness.

*TAY-EH data included only for disorders with >1 study reporting prevalence.
Research – First Steps

Prevalence, Comorbidity, and Psychosocial Correlates of Psychopathology and Substance Use Disorders Among Homeless Transitional Age Youth: Preliminary Findings

- DSM 5 Diagnoses (n=76)
- DSM 5 Comorbidity

≥1 Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE)

Average ACEs: 4.4
(out of 8)

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Substance Use Disorders and Psychiatric Illness Among Transitional Age Youth Experiencing Homelessness

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Research – First Steps
Research – Stress and Cannabis

- Why is cannabis use so common among TAY-EH?
- Hypothesis: High burden of stress and dysregulated stress reactivity drives high rates of cannabis use
  - Early life adversity
  - Discrimination/stigma
  - Resilience
  - Psychiatric and substance use disorders
- Psychophysiological assessments measuring stress response and connection to cannabis use disorder
Research – Resilience

- External Resources
- Internal Resilience
- Suicidality
Research – Next Steps

- Collaborations with Center of Excellence
- Integrating clinical care, teaching, and outcome research at Bridge Over Troubled Waters
- Participant-centered, responsible, and responsive study designs