Adolescent Substance Use: Standardizing Screening Methods in Clinical Practice

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Castleton Community Health Center

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Problem Identification and AHEC Focus Area

- A national survey in 2019 revealed that **17.2%** of all adolescents aged 12-17 years old used illicit substances in the past year[1]
  - Substances included alcohol, nicotine, marijuana, and opioids
- Substance use disorders are highly correlated with **depression and anxiety**[2]
- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends **screening** for substance use **during each adolescent patient encounter**, including acute visits[3]
- **AHEC Focus Areas:** Behavioral Health Integration, Medical Practice Transformation

Public Health Cost

- One study estimated that youth and adult substance use to costs the U.S. around **$442 billion** each year[4] in treatment costs

- Studies show that implementation of standardized substance use screening tools (e.g., the SBIRT screening tool), can result in **an annual net saving of $792** per patient[5] in treatment costs

Community Perspectives

- “It would be helpful to have a standardized screening tool that is easy to use and implement during a visit for youth patients”
  - Anonymized response, local primary care provider

- “Substance use, especially with e-cigarettes, is a huge problem in middle and high schools, and seems to be strongly related to the high rates of depression and anxiety”
  - Meredith Smith, local school guidance counselor

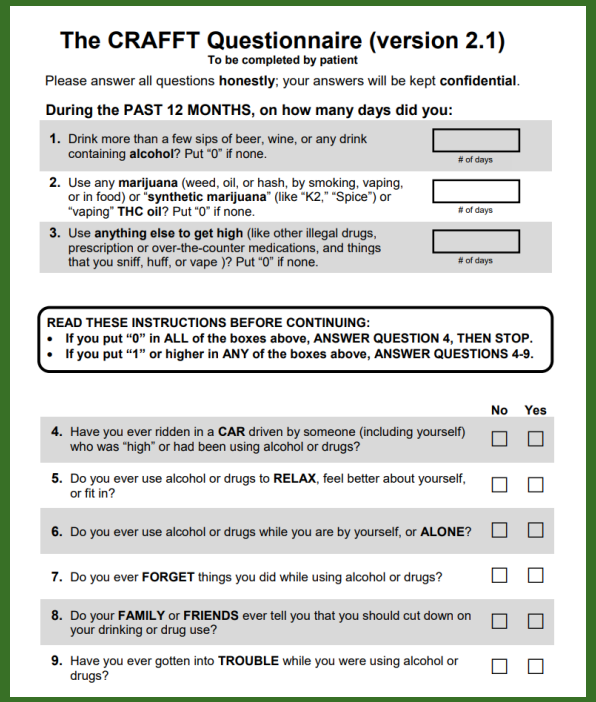
Intervention

- Discussed **current methodologies** for youth substance use screening, their **limitations**, and potential improvement strategies that would **increase detection rates** and **facilitate provider workflow**

- Proposed a solution that automatically incorporate the **CRAFFT** screening form into every encounter note for patients between the ages of 12 and 18
  - The CRAFFT tool is a streamlined set of questions **verbally** administered by a healthcare provider that screens for **alcohol, marijuana, and other illicit substance** use.
  - A positive result in the first section of the tool prompts **follow-up questions** in the second section

Results

- Implemented the **CRAFFT** screening tool as a form that is **automatically** loaded into MEDENT's patient encounter notes



The CRAFFT Questionnaire (version 2.1)

To be completed by patient

Please answer all questions **honestly**; your answers will be kept **confidential**.

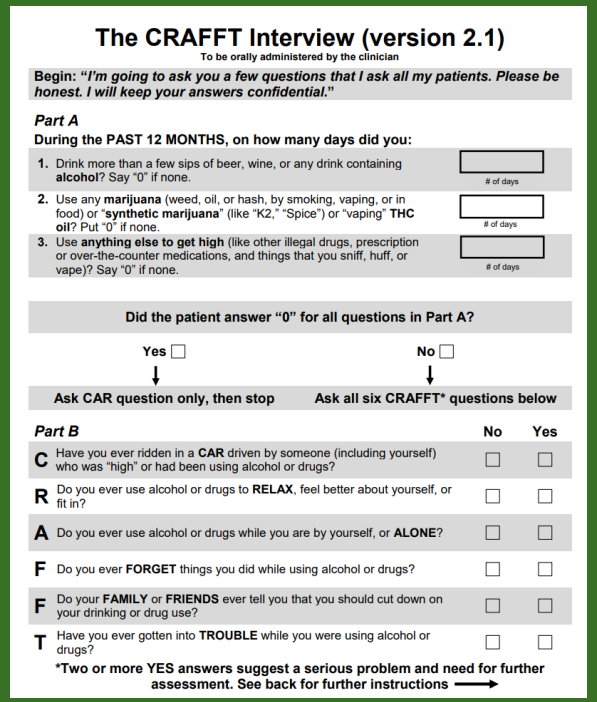
During the PAST 12 MONTHS, on how many days did you:

1. Drink more than a few sips of beer, wine, or any drink containing **alcohol**? Put "0" if none. ☐ # of days
2. Use any **marijuana** (weed, oil, or hash, by smoking, vaping, or in food) or "**synthetic marijuana**" (like "K2," "Spice") or "vaping" **THC oil**? Put "0" if none. ☐ # of days
3. Use **anything else to get high** (like other illegal drugs, prescription or over-the-counter medications, and things that you sniff, huff, or vape)? Put "0" if none. ☐ # of days

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE CONTINUING:
- **If you put "0" in ALL of the boxes above, ANSWER QUESTION 4, THEN STOP.**
- **If you put "1" or higher in ANY of the boxes above, ANSWER QUESTIONS 4-9.**

	No	Yes
4. Have you ever ridden in a **CAR** driven by someone (including yourself) who was "high" or had been using alcohol or drugs?	☐	☐
5. Do you ever use alcohol or drugs to **RELAX**, feel better about yourself, or fit in?	☐	☐
6. Do you ever use alcohol or drugs while you are by yourself, or **ALONE**?	☐	☐
7. Do you ever **FORGET** things you did while using alcohol or drugs?	☐	☐
8. Do your **FAMILY** or **FRIENDS** ever tell you that you should cut down on your drinking or drug use?	☐	☐
9. Have you ever gotten into **TROUBLE** while you were using alcohol or drugs?	☐	☐

Image adapted from crafft.org



The CRAFFT Interview (version 2.1)

To be orally administered by the clinician

Begin: "*I'm going to ask you a few questions that I ask all my patients. Please be honest. I will keep your answers confidential.*"

Part A

During the PAST 12 MONTHS, on how many days did you:

1. Drink more than a few sips of beer, wine, or any drink containing **alcohol**? Say "0" if none. ☐ # of days
2. Use any **marijuana** (weed, oil, or hash, by smoking, vaping, or in food) or "**synthetic marijuana**" (like "K2," "Spice") or "vaping" **THC oil**? Put "0" if none. ☐ # of days
3. Use **anything else to get high** (like other illegal drugs, prescription or over-the-counter medications, and things that you sniff, huff, or vape)? Say "0" if none. ☐ # of days

Did the patient answer "0" for all questions in Part A?

Yes ☐ → **Ask CAR question only, then stop**

No ☐ → **Ask all six CRAFFT* questions below**

Part B		No	Yes
C	Have you ever ridden in a **CAR** driven by someone (including yourself) who was "high" or had been using alcohol or drugs?	☐	☐
R	Do you ever use alcohol or drugs to **RELAX**, feel better about yourself, or fit in?	☐	☐
A	Do you ever use alcohol or drugs while you are by yourself, or **ALONE**?	☐	☐
F	Do you ever **FORGET** things you did while using alcohol or drugs?	☐	☐
F	Do your **FAMILY** or **FRIENDS** ever tell you that you should cut down on your drinking or drug use?	☐	☐
T	Have you ever gotten into **TROUBLE** while you were using alcohol or drugs?	☐	☐

***Two or more YES answers suggest a serious problem and need for further assessment. See back for further instructions →**

Image adapted from crafft.org

Evaluation of Effectiveness and Limitations

- **Evaluating effectiveness of the intervention**
  - Measure the rates of detected youth substance use before and after implementing the CRAFFT tool. Improved rates of detection would indicate an improvement to screening protocol
  - Survey healthcare providers about the effectiveness and efficiency of the CRAFFT tool compared to non-standardized screening methods to see if workflow has enhanced
- **Limitations**
  - Due to the significant time limitations for each patient visit (15 to 30 minutes per visit), implementing additional forms can hinder provider workflow
  - Adolescent patients are often accompanied by legal guardians, which can lead to hesitancy revealing substance use behaviors

Recommendations for Future Interventions

- The newly updated **CRAFFT+N 2.1** substance use screening tool was not yet a part of MEDENT's set of downloadable forms. However, it represents a more thorough yet still concise screening protocol that should be implemented once available in the EMR.

- There are a wide range of substance use screening tools available. It would be valuable to compare the efficacy of those other tools **(e.g., Screening to Brief Intervention Tool)** compared to the CRAFFT

- Collect longitudinal data on the **detection rates** of substance use using the CRAFFT tool

References

1. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2021). Screening and Treatment of Substance Use Disorders among Adolescents. Advisory.
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4. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (US); Office of the Surgeon General (US). Facing Addiction in America: The Surgeon General's Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health [Internet]. Washington (DC): US Department of Health and Human Services; 2016 Nov. CHAPTER 7, VISION FOR THE FUTURE: A PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH.
5. Paltzer J, Moberg DP, Burns M, Brown RL. Health Care Utilization After Paraprofessional-administered Substance Use Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment: A Multi-level Cost-offset Analysis. Med Care. 2019 Sep;57(9):673-679. doi: 10.1097/MLR.0000000000001162. PMID: 31295165; PMCID: PMC6690790.