Evaluation and Development of Tools for Assessing Risk of Substance Abuse Through Family Health History

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Substance abuse (including alcohol and drug use) is a dangerous epidemic in the United States; studies have determined that family health history (FHH) contributes to risk of future abuse in later generations. However, no method of calculating risk for substance abuse consider FHH. The main objective of this investigation is to create a tool to assess FHH in determining the risk of substance abuse. We evaluated 23 current risk assessment tools and questionnaires (15 FHH screeners and 8 substance abuse assessments) for integration of FHH and substance abuse, usability, and ease of accessibility. From these tools, 20 were easy to use, 18 were readily accessible and easy to find, and only 1 integrated FHH and substance abuse. Based on available statistics on the population affected by substance abuse, substance abuse related mortalities, and other factors, we chose 17-26-year-olds as the target population for tool creation. A preliminary tool was created to combine key components of risk assessment, such as substance use by first degree relatives and current living environment, to assess substance abuse risk. The results of this study culminated in the creation of a tool that is designed to identify at-risk individuals. Future studies will need to be conducted to test the tool’s effectiveness in human trials.