

## Précis - Global Trends: Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders

According to the World Health Organization, mental health conditions have increased by 13%, and they continue to rise globally; substance use disorders have also been increasing<sup>1</sup>. Even though all ages are impacted, children and young adults with mental health conditions are at a high percentage<sup>1</sup>. The combination of mental disorders and substance use disorder is an example of a comorbidity, and the combination of both disorders can worsen outcomes<sup>2</sup>. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), nearly 8 million adults simultaneously face mental health and substance use disorders; almost 40% of those who have substance use disorders also deal with mental illness, and 18% of people who have a mental health disorder also struggle with substance use<sup>2</sup>.

I think this is an important health trend to pay attention to since it's only continuing to increase worldwide. "Good health and wellbeing" are a part of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but UN officials have also agreed that mental health has been overlooked<sup>3</sup>. Even though there are effective interventions available for both mental health and substance use disorders, depending on where you live, and other socioeconomic factors really determines your access and ability to receive these services<sup>2</sup>. Among all adults that live with both disorders, only 9% received treatment for both; about 34% and 4% adults received treatment for mental health care only or substance use only<sup>2</sup>. There are many barriers to receiving treatment, such as affordability, lack of knowledge on available treatments, stigma, and fear<sup>2</sup>. From a policy standpoint, we must improve access and affordability of not only the health care system overall but focus on improving mental health policies since they tend to be overlooked when discussing health outcomes. In general, we should start paying attention to communities that tend to not seek mental health or substance use interventions, even when they are available. Some of the barriers listed were "fear of being committed," "fear of confidentiality," and "not ready to stop using<sup>2</sup>." These are barriers that could be ameliorated through community education and support, and more likely to be implemented quicker than policy changes. However, improving access and making treatments more affordable are the most effective ways to improve outcomes.

#### References:

1. World Health Organization. Mental Health. Accessed February 12, 2023. [https://www.who.int/health-topics/mental-health#tab=tab\\_2](https://www.who.int/health-topics/mental-health#tab=tab_2)
2. National Institute on Drug Abuse. Comorbidity: Substance Use and Other Mental Disorders. Accessed February 12, 2023. <https://nida.nih.gov/research-topics/trends-statistics/infographics/comorbidity-substance-use-other-mental-disorders>
3. United Nations. Mental health 'neglected issue' but key to achieving Global Goals, say UN chiefs. Accessed February 12, 2023. <https://guides.lib.purdue.edu/c.php?g=683613&p=4832375>.