U.S. Drug-Related Emergency Department Visits by Adults Increased Significantly Since 1995; Alcohol-Related Visits Stable

“Drug-related ED visits have significantly increased over the last decade,” according to a recent analysis of data from the National Alcohol Surveys. In 1995, less than one percent (0.6%) of adults reported obtaining ED treatment for an illness or injury for which they reported drug use within 6 hours of the event, compared to 3.7% in 2005. Alcohol-related ED visits, however, did not change significantly, ranging between 5% and 7% over the period. According to the authors, these data suggest that “ED continues to be an important site for initiating screening, brief intervention and referral to treatment for both alcohol- and drug-related problems” and that the “Healthy People 2010 objectives which call for a reduction in alcohol and drug-related ED visits may not be reached” (p. 582).


NOTES: Drugs are defined as illicit or nonprescription psychoactive drugs.