***Lesson Plans for Infusing Content on Substance Use Problems and Older Adults in Advanced Master’s Courses***

Diana DiNitto, Ph.D., ACSW, LCSW, AAC

Cullen Trust Centennial Professor in Alcohol Studies and Education

 Distinguished Teaching Professor

University of Texas at Austin



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Few, if any, social work courses are dedicated to substance use problems among older adults. If content on this topic is included at all, it is usually included as part of courses that focus on older adults (e.g., social work practice with older adults), substance use problems (e.g., a survey course on alcohol and drug abuse and dependence), or other topics (e.g., clinical assessment or human development/ lifespan). There is no single or best way to infuse content on older adults and substance use problems into the curriculum. The following suggestions and accompanying materials may be useful for infusing content on older adults and substance use problems in master’s level social work courses. These procedures have been used to infuse this content in a course called Clinical Assessment and Differential Diagnosis at the University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work.

Materials:

* PowerPoint presentation: “Never Too Old: Substance Use Problems and Older Adults.” This presentation is found at the same Website as this lesson plan. It includes teaching notes for each slide.
* Primary reference: Blow, F. C. (1998). *Substance abuse among older adults*, Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) Series 26. DHHS Publication No. (SMA) 98-3179. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Available on line at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/bv.fcgi?rid=hstat5.chapter.48302>. To prepare for delivering the content in the PowerPoint, the instructor may wish to study TIP 26 and other references provided at the end of the PowerPoint slides.
* Manual: Levin, S. M., & Kruger, J. (2000). *Substance abuse among older adults: A guide for social service providers*. Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) Series 26. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Substance Abuse Treatment. It is available in hard copy from SAMHSA. This guide contains many of the tools discussed in TIP 26. All materials in the guide are also found in TIP 26 should copies of the guide not be available.
* Videos (you may wish to select one or more):
* *Brief Alcohol Interventions for Older Adults* from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) demonstrates a brief intervention with an older woman who has not experienced alcohol-related problems but may be classified as a “risk drinker,” i.e., drinking more than recommended for a woman over aged 65. The intervention is conducted in a primary health care setting. It is available at <http://preventionpathways.samhsa.gov/res_videos.htm>.
* The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) has an online training program that includes a video of a brief intervention with a 57-year-old divorced, unemployed man who has a long-standing alcohol use disorder and is hospitalized at the time of the initial intervention. See “Helping Patients Who Drink Too Much: A Clinician’s Guide and Resources,” available at <http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/Publications/EducationTrainingMaterials/guide.htm>.
* As part of the CSWE Gero-Ed Master’s Advanced Curriculum Project, we developed a video “Motivational Interviewing with Older Adults.” It includes information on Motivational Interviewing; an interview with a fictitious client, Mrs. Cortez, aged 73, who is engaged in risk drinking; and a debriefing of the interview. It is available at the Website at which you are viewing this lesson plan.
* Case studies: Those included at the Website as part of this package focus on Mexican American older adults. They are complex or multiproblem cases involving a substance use problem as well as a mental health, health, and/or psychosocial problem. Instructors may wish to use one or more of these cases as an in-class exercise, for homework assignments, or for an in-class or take home test. The cases can be used to help students develop or test their diagnostic skills. They can also be used to help students learn to assess clients’ strengths and needs, address cultural considerations, and develop age appropriate and culturally sensitive intervention plans. The cases can also be used as the basis for role-plays.
* Mr. Alvarez, who is happily married and retired from his job, has osteoarthritis for which he is taking a narcotic analgesic (pain reliever). He was recently admitted to the hospital after taking prescribed lorazepam for some symptoms of worry and anxiety and related concerns. Mr. Alvarez is diagnosed with Substance-Induced Delirium. Once his acute health problem is resolved, he may need help with managing pain, and he likely needs social work services to help him adjust to retirement and other changes in his life. (This case may also be modified to indicate a Substance Abuse diagnosis.)
* Mrs. Cortez, a widow, was admitted to the hospital after being found on the floor of her home. She has diabetes that is not being well controlled. She began abusing alcohol after a new neighbor who drinks befriended her. Mrs. Cortez needs help with eating and cooking in ways that will help control her diabetes, and she needs help in reducing or eliminating alcohol use. She also needs to be assessed to determine whether she needs help at home or should continue to live alone. Her children live in the area and can assist her. (Rather than Alcohol Abuse, this case may be modified as a case of risk drinking.)
* Mr. Montemayor is married and resides at home with his wife. He has long-standing alcohol dependence and has developed dementia. In particular, Mr. Montemayor and his family need assistance to determine if services are available to allow Mr. Montemayor to live at home and if remaining at home is in his and his wife’s best interest or if a long-term care placement is needed. Their adult children do not live nearby but they may be able to assist in decision-making. They may also need assistance to address the affects of growing up in a home with a father dependent on alcohol.
* Mr. and Mrs. Aguirre both have a diagnosis of Alcohol Abuse. Mrs. Aguirre’s alcohol problem developed because her husband insists she drink with him and because she finds that alcohol has a numbing affect that helps her sleep and survive her husband’s physical and psychological abuse. Mr. Aguirre has a personality disorder and has abused his wife for years. Mrs. Aguirre is depressed. Both need mental health services. Mrs. Aguirre also needs help from adult protective services and/or a battered women’s shelter.
* Assigned or suggested readings: Depending on the instructor’s purpose, there are many materials on older adults and substance use problems from which to choose. Because our project was also concerned with Mexican American older adults, some of the suggested readings focus on this population. Although there is a substantial literature on older adults and substance use problems, the is little information on prevention and intervention for older adults of particular racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds.
* The following provides an overview of substance abuse problems among older adults: Vinton, L., & Wambach, K. G. (2005). Alcohol and drug use among elderly people. In C. A. McNeece & D. M. DiNitto, *Chemical dependency: A systems approach* (3rd ed., pp. 484-502). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
* The following focuses on Mexican Americans and substance use problems: Alavrez, L. R., & Ruiz, P. (2001). Substance abuse in the Mexican American population. In S. L. A. Straussner, *Ethnocultural factors in substance abuse treatment* (pp.111-136). New York: Guilford Press.
* The following focuses on older Latino substance abusers: Kail, B. L., & DeLaRosa, M. (1999). Challenges to treating the elderly Latino substance abuser: A not so hidden agenda. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work 30*(1/2), 123-141.

Steps in the Lesson Plan:

1. Prior to the lesson, the instructor may wish to give a pre-test to determine the students’ learning needs. The same instrument may also be used as a post-test. Or, the instructor may prefer to test students’ learning at the end of the lesson or have students demonstrate their learning through role-plays or in other ways. The four case examples of Mexican American older adults described above also include essay, short answer, and multiple choice questions that can be used on tests or for class discussion. Answer keys for all the questions are also included.
2. Readings: Prior to the class session, students receive the *TIP 26* manual and are asked to do the assigned or suggested readings noted above.
3. The didactic part of the presentation centers on the PowerPoint presentation “Never Too Old: Substance Use Problems and Older Adults” (included as part of this package). If there is not enough time to use all the slides, or all the slides do not fit the instructor’s purpose, slides can be omitted. The PowerPoint is divided into several sections (e.g., Incidence and Prevalence, Screening, Diagnosis, Intervention) to facilitate selecting areas on which the instructor would like to focus. Teaching notes for each slide are included in the Notes section of the PowerPoint presentation. The references on which each slide are based are also included so that the instructor may refer to them if needed. Each section of the presentation is described briefly here:
* Title slide: This slide emphasizes the theme of this presentation--that we should never think that someone is too old to develop an alcohol or drug problem.
* Credits slide. This slide gives credit to the Hartford Foundation and the Council on Social Work Education for its support of this project.
* Incidence and Prevalence: The 3 slides in this section provide a brief overview of the extent of alcohol and drug problems in the older adult population emphasizing that alcohol, prescription drugs, and tobacco are the main drugs of abuse. The second slide indicates how illicit drug use among older adults will increase as the baby boomers age, and the third slide addresses similarities and differences in substance use among older adults in the three largest ethnic groups in the United States.
* Risk Factors: There are 3 slides in this section. The first slide notes that risks for substance use problems may vary or change during the different stages of the life cycle. (Some instructors who participated in the testing of the materials in this package integrated the material on substance use and older adults with material on substance use among younger adults and compared and contrasted substance use problems at different stages of the life cycle.) The other slides in this section focus on risks for older adults such as physical changes that slow the metabolism of alcohol and drugs as a person ages. In pre- and post-test comparisons administered in the development and testing of the materials provided in this package, it seems that students may have become “over-sensitized” to some aspects of substance use among older adults. For example, after the presentation, students sometimes incorrectly answered that there was more nontherapeutic (i.e., intentional) use of prescription drugs among older adults than among younger adults, which is not true. To prevent such misconceptions, points like this may require added emphasis.
* Prescription Drugs: The 3 slides on prescription drugs note why prescription drug use may be a problem for older adults even in light of improvements in drug safety and prescribing practices. The third slide emphasizes that many drugs interact with alcohol and that some prescribed drugs may cause problems like delirium even at therapeutic doses.
* Screening: There are 10 slides in this section. They begin with recommend limits on alcohol consumption for adults and continue with slides on warning signs of alcohol and drug problems and barriers to screening and identification of alcohol and drug problems among older adults. Two slides are designed to test myths about older adults and substance use problems and provide a break in the presentation by allowing an opportunity for interaction with students (or other audiences). Three slides introduce screening instruments often used with older adults, and one slide offers ideas for improving screening. The last slide encourages periodic screening of older adults to determine if substance use problems are present.
* Diagnosis: There are 9 slides on diagnosis. The first encourages taking a good social history in order to help insure that a proper diagnosis is made. This emphasis on the social history should resonate with social work students. The next 2 slides focus on criteria for Substance Use Disorders—Abuse and Dependence—as defined in the American Psychological Association’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder, fourth edition, text revision*. The following slide shows how the *DSM* criteria might not fit older adults as well as they do younger adults. The fifth slide then introduces an alternative classification of older adults with alcohol problems. The next slide introduces the Substance-Induced Disorders included in the *DSM* as related to sleep, dementia, mood disorders, etc. Some of the slides in this section may be omitted if they are too detailed for the instructor’s purpose or if the presenter wishes to focus on the Substance Use Disorders (Abuse and Dependence) rather than the Substance-Induced Disorders. Another slide introduces the drug classifications included in the DSM, which also may be omitted depending on the presenter’s purpose and whether there is time to do more than briefly mention these drug classifications. such as sedatives, amphetamines, and opioids. This section concludes with a discussion of early and late onset of drinking problems.
* Dementia, Delirium, and Psychiatric Comorbidity: Four of the 5 slides in this section focus on dementia and delirium. Students may be unfamiliar with these diagnoses. The purpose of these slides is to introduce information about dementia and delirium and the differences between them and to indicate that alcohol and/or drug use may cause dementia and delirium. The last slide addresses psychiatric comorbidity and introduces the concept that people with substance use problems often have mental health problems and vice versa. These slides also emphasize the need to distinguish between memory problems that result from alcohol or drug use, depression, dementia, or some combination of these problems, so the patient or client can be treated properly. These slides complement those in the previous section that stress the need for careful diagnosis. The instructor may wish to emphasize that social workers are often part of multidisciplinary teams that evaluate patients holistically to determine an appropriate diagnosis and cause of the patient’s problems. Those who work with older adults need knowledge of all these conditions.
* Culture: The next 3 slides emphasize the importance of culture in understanding alcohol and drug problems and developing culturally relevant treatment or intervention plans. Given the emphasis of our project, the slides in this section focus on Mexican Americans. All four case examples included in our package of materials are of Mexican American older adults. Depending on the presenter’s purpose, these slides may be omitted or slides on other cultural groups can be substituted.
* Intervention: There are 8 slides in this section. The first slide addresses the Stages of Change model and the need to identify whether the client is aware of a problem and whether the client wishes to change an unhealthy behavior such as excessive alcohol or drug use. This slide emphasizes the social work principle of “starting where the client is.” Three slides address brief intervention, and as noted earlier in this lesson plan, videos are available demonstrating brief interventions with older adults. Other slides in this section address approaches like detoxification, inpatient care, and case management that may necessary for clients who do not respond to briefer interventions or for whom brief intervention is not appropriate. Mutual help groups are also mentioned. Strategies for improving treatment of older adults with substance use problems are also presented. The presentation ends with a slide reminding the audience that when it comes to substance use, it is never too late or too early to develop a problem, to intervene, or to recover.
* References: These 2 slides list the references on which this presentation is based.

4. Though the PowerPoint may be useful for delivering a considerable amount of information, the instructor may want to balance this with opportunities for students to be more actively involved in learning the material, such as discussing cases or practice in arriving at diagnoses or administering screening instruments. As instructors know, students appreciate opportunities for active participation and alternatives to lecture-only presentations. Some opportunities for active participation are noted here:

* Several slides in the PowerPoint presentation refer to screening tools. The CAGE, Michigan Alcoholism Screening Test—Geriatric version, and the Health Screening Survey were selected for highlighting in this presentation. Instructors may wish to do a class exercise by selecting one or more of these screening tools, or perhaps another screening tool such as the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT). These instruments are found in TIP 26 or the accompanying guide to TIP 26. In this exercise, student can divide into groups of two or three. One can be “the older adult client,” one can be “the social worker,” and if there is a third student, he or she can be “the observer.” “The social worker” should be instructed to introduce the screening process and ask “the older client” the items on the screening tool. After the simulation of administering the screening tool, “the older adult client” can discuss what it felt like to be asked the questions, “the social worker” can discuss what it felt like to ask the questions,” and “the observer” can comment on the verbal and nonverbal interaction between the client and social worker. In these “practice” sessions, students may indicate discomfort with asking questions about substance use. The instructor may wish to suggest that social workers (or other providers) (1) ask the client or patient for permission to ask questions about alcohol or drug use before proceeding, (2) embed questions about alcohol or other drug use with other health questions, (3) ask such questions in ways that are as nonthreatening as possible, and (4) preface such questions by letting patients or clients know that they are not intended to embarrass but to help in assessing the patient’s or client’s situation and improving their well being, just as other health questions are.
* Some of the PowerPoint slides describe brief interventions. Following these slides, the video *Brief Interventions with Older Adults* can be utilized to demonstrate the process. The video is about 20 minutes long. This can be followed by a discussion of students’ reactions to the video. Questions might be:
* Did you think this was a realistic portrayal?
* What were the strong points of this intervention? What things do you think the interviewer did best? For example, do you think the interviewer followed each principle or step outlined in the video, and, if so, how did she do this?
* ***Appreciate*** the individual for participating
* ***Identify*** future goals
* ***Summarize*** health habits
* ***Educate*** on standard drink and types of older drinkers
* ***Explore*** reasons older person drinks and reasons to cut down or quit
* ***Develop*** a drinking agreement
* ***Plan*** for situations that may trigger drinking
* Would you have conducted the brief intervention differently? If so, at what points and how?
* How effective do you think the brief intervention will be with this client?

As an alternative, the video “Motivational Interviewing with Older Adults with Substance Use Problems” developed for this project may be used. This video is divided into three parts: (1) an introduction to Motivational Interviewing, (2) a demonstration interview with a client who is engaging in risk drinking, and (3) a debriefing of the interview. Each part is about 20 minutes long. A class discussion can follow addressing various aspects of Motivational Interviewing and students’ reactions to their use in this interview. A PowerPoint about Motivational Interviewing is also available as part of this package of materials that can be used alone or as an accompaniment to this video.

Instead of, or in addition to, these videos, the instructor may wish to demonstrate a brief intervention with an actor who has been prepared to play the role of an older adult who is engaging in risk drinking, alcohol misuse or abuse, prescription drug misuse, or perhaps illicit drug use such as smoking marijuana. Alternatively the instructor may ask a student to play the role of the client or social worker, perhaps with advanced preparation. This exercise can also be done in small groups with students taking each of the following roles: a client who is engaged in risk drinking or other form of substance misuse, the social worker who conducts a brief intervention, and an observer. Instructors may wish to use the Mrs. Cortez case included in this package, perhaps modified to illustrate risk drinking, as the basis for the role-play. The questions at the end of the case study materials can be used to promote discussion of the case.

5. Conclude the session by asking if there are any remaining questions or comments and summarize the major points of the class session. You may wish to ask students to name a few things they learned or ask them to take one minute to write down what they learned and to submit it anonymously or with their name for you to review.

Below is another outline for conducting a course session or sessions on substance use and older adults (thanks to Lisa Jennings for this plan):

1. Use the PowerPoint presentation discussed above as a primary means of delivering the material in class.

2. Discuss the case of Mrs. Cortez (and/or one of the other cases about older Mexican Americans mentioned above that was developed for this project) in small groups and have each group report its diagnosis or diagnoses or other aspects of the case (such as a recommended treatment/intervention plan) to the class. Address points of agreement and disagreement in the groups’ diagnostic assessment or intervention plans. The Mrs. Cortez case (and others in this package) provide a good deal of material to address in terms of the client’s belief system and cultural factors and how to incorporate the client’s worldview into a treatment/intervention plan that is acceptable to her (or him).

3. Discuss the short form of the Michigan Alcoholism Screening Test—Geriatric Version, which can be found at this Website: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/16/health/16bbox.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=10%20questions%20alcohol&st=cse> or see TIP 26. Or you may have students role play its administration.

4. Introduce students to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism’s “Helping Patients Who Drink Too Much: A Clinician’s Guide” available at

 <http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/Publications/EducationTrainingMaterials/guide.htm>.

 Emphasize the importance of helping older clients by using educational materials that are meaningful to them and easy to understand.

5. Discuss the case of the 57-year-old man at the Website of NIAAA’s Clinician’s Guide: <http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/Publications/EducationTrainingMaterials/VideoCases.htm>. The patient has been treated for alcohol problems multiple times. The video is interactive and allows the viewer to make choices about the course of action to take with the patient. Discuss the appropriateness of each possible course of action. The clinician in the video is a physician. The instructor can engage students in a discussion of how they think a social worker would respond to the patient based on what they have learned about best social work practices and if that would differ from the way the physician handled the case.

6. As homework before or after the class, ask students to peruse materials on Alcohol, Medication, and Other Drugs at the Website of the American Society on Aging:

<http://www.asaging.org/asav2/aod/index.cfm>. You may wish to ask students to comment on the materials or turn in a brief assignment noting three new things they learned from the materials.

7. Provide a wrap up to the session by summarizing the day’s lesson or asking students to comment on what they learned.

Diana DiNitto, June 2009, University of Texas at Austin, School of Social Work, ddinitto@mail.utexas.edu