

Potential subjects were sampled from the ER logs. Interviewers sought as voluntary study participants the first eligible person who entered the ER after the hour. Eligibility was determined first from the log and then through contact with the potential subject. When an eligible subject refused participation, the interviewer sought the second eligible subject who entered the ER after the hour, and so on. Selected patients, who were admitted to the hospital, were followed-up to seek their participation.

Exclusion Criteria

The study excluded several groups: non-Tennessee residents, juveniles (patients less than 18 years of age), patients admitted to other hospitals or transferred directly to other facilities who were not seen in the ER, patients in police custody, obstetrical patients who would be delivering in another hospital or facility, and patients who were too ill or injured to participate.

Weighting of Cases

For purposes of estimating the prevalence of AOD use, dependence and need for treatment, the cases in the ER sample were weighted. The weighting factor, which was hospital-specific, was derived from a two-stage procedure. The first stage yielded a crude weighting factor (cfw_i).

$$cfw_i = \left(\frac{\text{sampling weight of the } i^{\text{th}} \text{ hospital}}{\text{number of hospitals in the } i^{\text{th}} \text{ region}} \right) \cdot \left(\frac{\text{sampling weight of ER cases in the } i^{\text{th}} \text{ hospital}}{\text{total ER cases in the } i^{\text{th}} \text{ hospital}} \right)$$

This crude weighting factor equaled the product of the probability that a hospital was selected within each of the seven official health care regions, the number of hospitals in each region, and the probability of an ER case being selected within the three-week interviewing period.

In the second stage, the final hospital-specific weighting factor (wf_i) was determined by multiplying the crude weighting factor (cfw_i) by the number of patients sampled divided by the summation of the crude weights:

$$wf_i = \frac{cfw_i}{\sum_i cfw_i} \cdot (\text{total ER patients sampled})$$

A participation rate of about 75% was projected, based on similar studies conducted by the ARG in hospital ER settings. Conducive to a high participation rate in this kind of study is that potential participants may view a hospital-based, health-related survey as an extension of their care. With sensitivity to the health status of ER patients, efforts were made by interviewers, as necessary, to convert refusals by stressing the importance of the