

FACT SHEET ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN THE ELDERLY

- 1. Alcohol and prescription drug abuse is common in older persons.**
- 2. Many elders (8%) are problem drinkers.**
- 3. Alcohol damages the brain, heart, pancreas, peripheral nerves, and muscles in older persons.**
- 4. Most older alcoholics, i.e., two-thirds, go unrecognized by their primary care physician.**
- 5. Untreated alcohol withdrawal, i.e., delirium tremens, has a 15-30% mortality in older persons.**
- 6. Alcoholic DT's usually occur two or three days after the last drink.**
- 7. Many (25%) problem drinkers will reduce alcohol consumption if a doctor spends 15 minutes discussing damage produced by alcohol.**
- 8. Alcoholic dementia is a common cause of intellectual decline in older persons.**
- 9. Alcohol increases the symptoms of depression.**
- 10. Many (10%) older persons who visit a doctor's office suffer from alcohol abuse.**
- 11. Medicare pays more money for alcohol-related diseases in the elderly than heart attacks.**
- 12. Alcoholism in the elderly is a silent epidemic that causes health problems, dementia, disability, and death.**

For more information, call the

DEMENTIA EDUCATION & TRAINING PROGRAM – 1-800-457-5679