MSOS Sher diagnosing alcohol use disorder script

ACCORDING TO THE U.S. NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE, NEARLY 18 MILLION AMERICAN ADULTS HAVE AN ALCOHOL USE DISORDER, A DISEASE THAT CAUSES CRAVING, PHYSICAL DEPENDENCE AND A LOSS OF CONTROL.

NOW, RESEARCH FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI FOUND THAT THE CURRENT METHODS FOR DIAGNOSING ALCOHOL USE DISORDERS LEAVES MANY DAILY BINGE DRINKERS UNDIAGNOSED.

MU PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCES PROFESSOR KEN SHER REVIEWED DATA THAT PLACED INDIVIDUALS INTO THREE CATEGORIES BASED ON THEIR LEVEL OF DAILY DRINKING: LIGHT, HEAVY OR BINGE DRINKERS.

“We found that even in the group who binged daily, a large proportion of them, depending upon the diagnostic system, failed to diagnose with an alcohol use disorder or alcohol dependence.”

SHER EXPLAINED THAT MANY ALCOHOL RESEARCHERS ASK PARTICIPANTS FOR THE TOTAL NUMBER OF ALCOHOLIC DRINKS CONSUMED IN A WEEK AND THEN SIMPLY DIVIDE BY SEVEN. THIS METHOD FAILS TO ACCURATELY IDENTIFY DAILY DRINKING PATTERNS.

BY ADDING A SPECIFIED MEASURE OF TIME TO CURRENT DIAGNOSTIC STANDARDS, PEOPLE WHO EXPERIENCE THE CONSEQUENCES OF DAILY BINGE DRINKING CAN BE ACCURATELY DIAGNOSED WITH AN ALCOHOL USE DISORDER.

“We need to have a system that would capture these very heavy drinkers who don’t diagnose because we know even without alcohol use disorder, someone who is drinking at that level is drinking in a harmful way that is likely to catch up with them in some way at some point in their life.”

I’M CAILIN RILEY, WITH A MIZZOU SPOTLIGHT ON SCIENCE.