

UNCOPE

Norman G. Hoffmann, Ph.D.

The UNCOPE consists of six questions found in existing instruments and assorted research reports. This excellent screen was first reported by Hoffmann and colleagues in 1999. Variations in wording are noted for several of the items. The first wording is the original for the “U” and “P” items. The more concrete wording of the revised versions were found to be slightly better as a generic screen. Either version of the six questions may be used free of charge for oral administration in any medical, psychosocial, or clinical interview. They provide a simple and quick means of identifying risk for abuse and dependence for alcohol and other drugs. Please maintain attribution.

- U** “In the past year, have you ever drank or **used** drugs more than you meant to?”* ^{1,2}
Or as **revised** “Have you spent more time drinking or using than you intended to?” ²
- N** “Have you ever **neglected** some of your usual responsibilities because of using alcohol or drugs?” ²
- C** “Have you felt you wanted or needed to **cut down** on your drinking or drug use in the last year?”**
^{1, 2}
- O** “Has anyone **objected** to your drinking or drug use?” ^{3, 1*}
Or, “Has your family, a friend, or anyone else ever told you they **objected** to your alcohol or drug use?” ²
- P** “Have you ever found yourself **preoccupied** with wanting to use alcohol or drugs?” ²
Or as **revised**, “Have you found yourself thinking a lot about drinking or using?”
- E** “Have you ever used alcohol or drugs to relieve **emotional discomfort**, such as sadness, anger, or boredom?” ^{2, 1*}

Item Sources:

The original UNCOPE items were used in the CATOR treatment evaluation system, but were also part of other assessment tools and/or published in other studies. The following are original publications or instruments which contained one or more of the UNCOPE items:

1. Brown, R. L., Leonard, T., Saunders, L. A., & Papanouliotis, O. (1997). A two-item screening test for alcohol and other drug problems. *Journal of Family Practice*, 44, (2), 151-160.
2. Hoffmann, N. G. & Harrison, P. A. (1995). *SUDDS-IV: Substance Use Disorders Diagnostic Schedule*. Smithfield, RI: Evince Clinical Assessments.
3. Hoffmann, N. G. (1995). *TAAD: Triage Assessment for Addictive Disorders*. Smithfield, RI: Evince Clinical Assessments.

^{1*} Similar items identified by Brown, et al. as 3rd and 4th best discriminating items.

* SUDDS-IV uses two items for this construct. “Have you ever used alcohol or drugs when you didn’t intend to?” And, “Have you ever continued to use alcohol or drugs longer than you intended?”

** The SUDDS-IV uses a more stringent criterion for this construct in that it requires a failure to restrict or stop use, not just a desire to do so. The SUDDS-IV questions are: “Have you ever set rules to control your alcohol or drug use that you failed to follow? and “Have you ever wanted to stop using alcohol or drugs but couldn’t?”

A CAUTION REGARDING ALL SCREENS

Screens merely provide an indication of whether or not an individual appears at risk for a given condition. Screens are inappropriate for use as treatment intake tools and insufficient for supporting diagnoses. The UNCOPE and other screens for substance use disorders are most appropriate for identifying risk for abuse or dependence when neither is clearly identified as a problem. Appropriate venues for screening would be mental health and medical clinics, employee assistance counseling, marital and family counseling. Screens are inappropriate for evaluating persons arrested for driving under the influence, those presenting for treatment, or those being evaluated for any issue associated with substances. These latter individuals are already identified as being at risk, so a screen would be redundant. For these cases, more extensive diagnostic assessment tools such as the SUDDS-IV™ or CAAPE™ are recommended for adults or the PADDI™ for adolescents. Such diagnostic instruments are required for documentation when treatment recommendations or decisions other than referral for further evaluation are to be made.

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The following tables present the observed accuracy of the UNCOPE items in a variety of settings. The first table provides the findings on the UNCOPE in a sample of recent arrestees. In this study, the sensitivities and specificities were calculated on the basis of any positive findings for either alcohol or other drug dependence. The second table provides substance specific findings for the individual items and the UNCOPE as a screen in a very large sample of individuals in a treatment population.

General Sensitivity and specificity of the modified UNCOPE †

Score to be considered at risk for dependence	Sensitivity N = 201	Specificity N = 109
5-6	67%	98%
4-6	80%	87%
3-6	88%	83%
2-6	92%	70%

† Hoffmann, Hunt, Rhodes, & Riley (2003)

Sensitivity and Specificity of Original UNCOPE Items in Identifying Dependence (vs. No Problems or Abuse Only)

ITEM CONCEPT	Alcohol		Cocaine		Marijuana	
	Specificity n = 9,314	Sensitivity n = 30,330	Specificity n = 30,624	Sensitivity n = 9,139	Specificity n = 33,359	Sensitivity n = 6,384
	%	%	%	%	%	%
U - USED MORE THAN PLANNED	79	91	93	94	95	83
N - NEGLECTED RESPONSIBILITIES	81	83	94	88	95	73
C - WANTED TO CUT DOWN OR STOP	87	80	95	86	97	70
O - OBJECTIONS	68	90	92	84	90	79
P - PREOCCUPIED	84	80	94	83	90	88
E - RELIEVE EMOTIONAL DISTRESS	74	88	95	78	90	90

UNCOPE as a screen	Alcohol		Cocaine		Marijuana	
	Specificity	Sensitivity	Specificity	Sensitivity	Specificity	Sensitivity
Score of 2 or more to indicate any abuse OR dependence	97	93	99	94	97	82
Score of 4 or more to indicate dependence vs. all else	86	89	95	89	97	84

Sensitivity is the proportion of dependent individuals (true positives) correctly identified as being dependent (positives).

Specificity is the proportion of nondependent individuals (true negatives) correctly identified as not being dependent (negatives).

UNCOPE References:

Zywiak, W. H., Hoffmann, N. G., & Floyd, A. S. (1999). Enhancing alcohol treatment outcomes through aftercare and self-help groups. *Medicine & Health/Rhode Island* 82 (3), 87-90.

Hoffmann, N. G., Hunt, D. E., Rhodes, W. M., & Riley, K. J. (2003). UNCOPE: A brief screen for use with arrestees. *Journal of Drug Issues*, 33 (1), 29-44.

Campbell, T. C., Hoffmann, N. G., Hoffmann, T. D., & Gillaspay, J. A. (2005) UNCOPE: A screen for substance dependence among state prison inmates. *The Prison Journal*, 85(1), 7-17