About 40 million Americans are addicted to cigarettes, alcohol or drugs, new research finds.

That represents about 16 percent of the U.S. population aged 12 and older.

Another 80 million people -- 32 percent of the population -- are "risky" substance users, defined as using substances in a way that threatens health and safety.

Yet treatment is hard to come by, according to the study, which was released this week by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University in New York City. Only about one in 10 people who need treatment for their addiction actually gets it.

The lack of treatment is partially because treatment for addiction is "disconnected from mainstream medicine," according to a university news release. Most health care providers are not trained to diagnose or treat addiction. As a result, less than 6 percent of referrals to treatment facilities for substance abuse come from health professionals.

Although doctors commonly screen for a variety of health problems, including high blood pressure and high cholesterol, they rarely screen for substance abuse. They instead treat the fallout of the addiction -- injuries, unintended pregnancies, heart disease and cancers, said Drew Altman, chairman of the report's National Advisory Commission.

"This report shows that misperceptions about the disease of addiction are undermining medical care," said Altman, president of the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, a nonprofit health-policy analysis organization.

Another issue is that many addiction-treatment providers are counselors who have little or no medical credentials, researchers said. For example, 14 states don't require licensing or certification of addiction counselors, while six states have no requirements for minimum education of counselors.

In 2010, $28 billion was spent on addiction treatment, which pales in comparison to the spending on treatment of other diseases that affect fewer people, the researchers said. For example, $44 billion was spent on treating the 26 million Americans with diabetes, and $107 billion was spent on treating the 27 million people with heart conditions.

For more information

The U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse provides more information on drug abuse and addiction. Click here to access.

SOURCE: CASA Columbia, news release