

Alcohol brief intervention in bars and taverns: a 12-month follow-up study of Operation Drinksafe in Australia

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Abstract

This study examined the effect of an alcohol brief intervention program on drinkers in bars and taverns. A 12-month follow-up was conducted with 1211 patrons who took part in a program called Operation Drinksafe involving 118 hotels and clubs in north coast New South Wales, Australia. The brief intervention took ~5 min and consisted of a personalized risk assessment using the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT) in combination with a breathalyser to determine blood alcohol concentration (BAC). At follow-up, almost half (46%) the participants reported reduced their alcohol consumption. The mean AUDIT score reduced by 15%, weekly alcohol consumption by 13% and frequency of binge drinking by 19%. Those previously drinking at 'harmful' levels reduced most (AUDIT 29%, consumption 22% and binge frequency 37%). Females had almost twice the odds of reducing consumption compared to males (OR 1.75, CI: 1.33-2.33) as did participants with initial consumption above the mean (OR 2.03, CI: 1.58-2.60). Older respondents showed smaller reductions than young people in composite AUDIT score, but greater reductions on consumption and binge frequency scales. Although a control group was not feasible, these findings suggest that a brief intervention program, presented in an interesting way to drinkers in bars and taverns, may effectively reduce risky alcohol consumption. Brief interventions may be particularly beneficial for those drinking at hazardous and harmful levels who are ready to change their drinking pattern. The partnership between police and health services was the cornerstone of this intervention, and helped to foster co-operation and acceptance from licensees and their customers.

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