

Text-message-based drinking assessments and brief interventions for young adults discharged from the emergency department

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Abstract

BACKGROUND: Brief interventions have the potential to reduce heavy drinking in young adults who present to the emergency department (ED), but require time and resources rarely available. Text-messaging (TM) may provide an effective way to collect drinking data from young adults after ED discharge as well as to provide immediate feedback and ongoing support for behavior change. The feasibility of screening young adults in the ED, recruiting them for a TM-based interventional trial, collecting weekly drinking data through TM, and the variance in drinking outcomes remains unknown.**METHODS:** Young adults in 3 urban EDs (n = 45; aged 18 to 24 years, 54% women) identified as hazardous drinkers by the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test-Consumption score were randomly assigned to weekly TM-based feedback with goal setting (Intervention), weekly TM-based drinking assessments without feedback (Assessment), or control. Participants in the Intervention group who reported ≥ 5 (for men) and ≥ 4 (for women) maximum drinks during any one 24-hour period were asked whether they would set a goal to reduce their drinking the following week. We describe the interaction with TM and goal setting. We also describe the heavy drinking days (HDDs), drinks per drinking day (DPDD) using timeline follow-back procedure at baseline and 3 months.**RESULTS:** We screened 109 young adults over 157 hours across 24 unique days and 52 (48%; 95% CI 38 to 50) screened positive for hazardous drinking. Of these, 45 (87%; 95% CI 74 to 94) met inclusion criteria, were enrolled and randomized, and 6 (13%; 95% CI 5 to 27) did not complete 3-month web-based follow-up; 88% (95% CI 84 to 91) of weekly TM-based drinking assessments were answered, with 77% (95% CI 58 to 90) of participants responding to all 12 weeks. Agreeing to set a goal was associated with a repeat HDD 36% (95% CI 17 to 55) of the time compared with 63% (95% CI 44 to 81) when not willing to set a goal. At 3 months, participants that were exposed to the TM-based intervention had 3.4 (SD 5.4) fewer HDDs in the last month and 2.1 (SD 1.5) fewer DPDD when compared to baseline.**CONCLUSIONS:** TM can be used to assess drinking in young adults and can deliver brief interventions to young adults discharged from the ED. TM-based interventions have the potential to reduce heavy drinking among young adults but larger studies are needed to establish efficacy.

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