

A Scoping Review of Reimbursement Practices for Substance Use Research Participation in the Australian Context

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BACKGROUND & AIM

- Financial reimbursement for substance use research provides a mechanism to compensate participants for their time, inconvenience and expenses, and contribute to scientific rigour.
- Although there is general acceptance within the field that reimbursement is appropriate, there is little clarity or guidance on reimbursement amounts or processes.
- We examined participant reimbursement practices in Australian substance use research by examining participant reimbursement practices reported in research published in *Drug and Alcohol Review* throughout 2017 and 2018.

METHODS

Inclusion criteria for papers were:

- Research on substance use (licit or illicit) or treatment
- Data collected directly from an individual user or client

Information was collected from each paper on:

- Participant population
- Substance(s) of interest
- Research assessments (e.g. surveys, phlebotomy, etc.) and length of time to complete
- Reimbursement type (e.g. cash, voucher, other) and value
- Country of research

RESULTS

Paper Characteristics

129 papers met the inclusion criteria

Characteristics of eligible papers

	Eligible Papers (N=129)	
	N	%
Population of Interest		
General population	94	72.9
Females	7	5.4
Males	5	3.9
First Nations Peoples	5	3.9
Inmates	3	2.3
School Students	10	7.8
Street involved	5	3.9
Substance of Interest		
Alcohol	43	33.3
Illicit Substances	37	28.7
Pharmaceuticals	6	4.7
Tobacco/Nicotine	10	7.8
Mixed Substances	33	25.6
Engaged via Health Service		
Yes	53	41.1
No	76	58.9
Country of Research		
Australia	59	45.7
International	70	54.3
High Income -	45	64.3
Low/Middle Income -	16	22.9
Multi-national -	9	12.9

Australian Study Results (n=59)

39 (66%) of the Australian studies provided information on mode of reimbursement:

Mode of reimbursement



**Cash/
Monetary**
25%



**Shopping/Gift
Voucher**
14%



Other
(prize draw, token gift, etc)
12%



**Unknown/
Not Disclosed**
34%



**No
Reimbursement**
15%

Health service recruitment

- Health services were used to recruit participants in 26 of the Australian studies (44%).
- Studies recruiting via health services tended to provide cash or vouchers to participants (58%).
- Where participation was recognised with other forms of reimbursement (i.e. not cash/vouchers), it was more often in studies not recruiting via health services (18%).
- Information on reimbursement was not supplied in 34% of papers, and was common for studies recruiting from non-health services (42%).
- Only a small proportion of both health service recruited and non-health service recruited explicitly provided no reimbursement (15% each)

Duration & Reimbursement Value

Most studies did not report on the time to complete assessment or the reimbursement value:

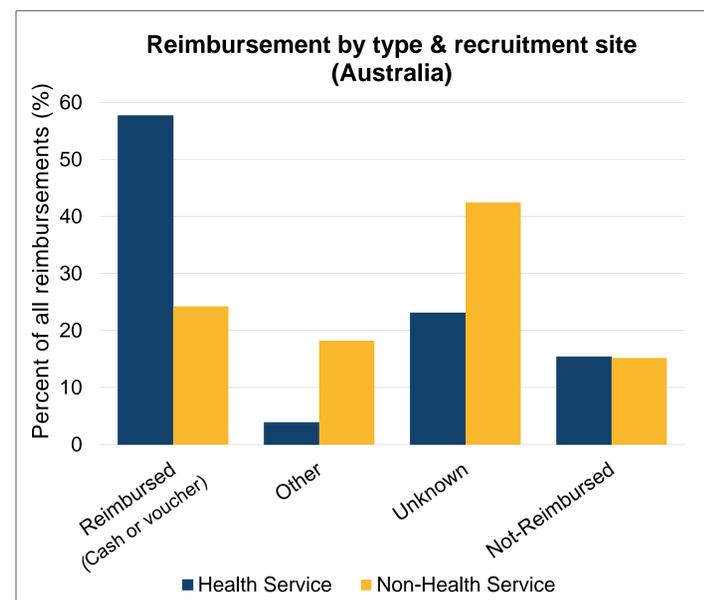


**Time to complete
assessments**
42%



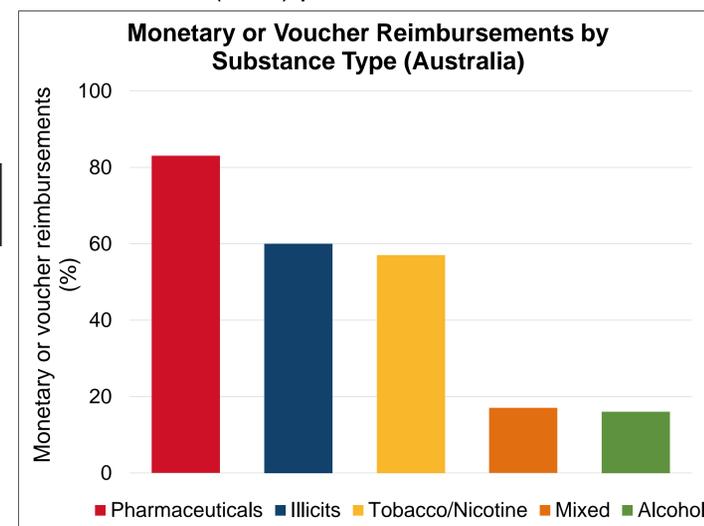
**Value of
reimbursement**
36%

Both assessment time & value 25%



Substance of Interest

- Most studies on pharmaceuticals (83%) and illicit substances (60%) provided cash/voucher.
- Few studies on alcohol (16%) and mixed substances (17%) provided cash/voucher.



DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

- There appears to be wide variation in participant reimbursement practice in Australian substance use research, especially across substances.
- Greater guidance is needed regarding participation reimbursement.
- Input from consumers and services providers is essential to improve and standardise practice and expand research participation.
- More standardised participant reimbursement practices would improve equity and scientific rigour and may have implications for research translation.