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Exploring the characteristics of family violence relative to packaged liquor outlet density using ambulance attendance data

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Introduction and Aims: Packaged liquor licence density has been associated with increased rates of family violence. Previous studies have predominantly considered family violence as a single outcome, without consideration of sub-types of family violence. This study aimed to analyse the role of packaged liquor licence density for family violence grouped by the type of violence, the role the individual plays in the violence, the relationship between parties, and whether alcohol was acutely involved in the incident.

Design and Methods: The study uses data from 171 postcodes in Victoria, Australia (2016-17 financial year) that met inclusion criteria. Packaged liquor licence density was calculated from liquor licensing records. Family violence data was obtained from coded ambulance records, collected as part of the Ambo project, based on the postcode of the ambulance attendance. Relationships between variables were analysed using linear regression, including consideration of socio-economic status.

Results: Packaged liquor licence density was associated with increased ambulance attendances for physical family violence, physical family violence where the parties were intimate partners, and family violence where alcohol had been acutely consumed at the time of the incident. Packaged liquor licence density was not significantly associated with ambulance attendances for threatening behaviour, family violence where the parties were other family members, or family violence where alcohol had not been acutely consumed within the incident.

Discussions and Conclusions: Findings are consistent with the hypothesis that alcohol increases family violence severity. Alcohol availability may be an effective intervention point for a sub-set of family violence.

Implications for Practice or Policy: There is ongoing debate about the role of alcohol in family violence, which influences whether alcohol availability is used as a family violence intervention. Our findings provide a more nuanced conclusion: reducing alcohol availability may reduce the severity of family violence incidents that acutely involve alcohol.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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