

IMPACT OF BRIEF PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL INTERVENTIONS FOR REDUCING ALCOHOL USE AND RELATED HARM IN SCHOOL LEAVERS

Presenting Authors:

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Introduction and Aims: Many young people engage in risky partying behaviours as they transition beyond school. The present study examined the impact of brief psychoeducation interventions on substance use, psychological distress and wellbeing.

Design and Method: Participants were 334 (53% Female, ($M_{age} = 17.14$) predominately High School leavers, who received a psychoeducation intervention on safe partying behaviours (SP), an enhanced version of SP, or a standard health curriculum control. Surveys were at baseline; 2 weeks, immediately following post-graduation celebratory event "Schoolies"; and 4 months, immediately following university orientation "O-week".

Results: There were escalations in drinking post-school, particularly for those attending "Schoolies Week". Time by group effects were found for problem drinking, $F(2, 227)=3.07$, $p=.049$, and wellbeing, $F(4, 439)=3.54$, $p=.007$. There was no increase in problem drinking from baseline to follow-up for the SP group, but increases in problem drinking for the other two conditions. Both intervention groups had improvements in wellbeing scores from baseline to post-Schoolies, which were maintained across time. This is contrasted to the control condition, which showed a decrease in wellbeing scores from baseline to second follow-up.

Discussion and Conclusions: Findings suggest that educating high school leavers on safe partying behaviours through a brief psychoeducational intervention can reduce risky substance use and improve wellbeing of young people, during this high-risk transition.

Implications for Practice and Policy: Post-high school escalation in drinking, particularly among those attending celebratory events, highlights the need for preventative interventions during this transition period.

Implications for Translational Research: The school-based delivery of these programs provides a unique opportunity to provide large numbers of young people with access to early interventions during this vulnerable life stage generally characterized internationally by elevated risk of alcohol and drug-related harm.