

## **Ready2Change: A randomised controlled trial of a telephone-delivered intervention for problem alcohol use**

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**Introduction/Aims:** Despite the high prevalence of alcohol use problems, uptake of treatment remains low. Telephone-delivered interventions have potential to overcome many of the individual and structural barriers to accessing treatment, thereby increasing opportunity for earlier intervention. This study examined the effectiveness of the Ready2Change (R2C) structured telephone-delivered intervention in reducing alcohol problem severity among individuals with problem alcohol use.

**Design/Methods:** Participants from across Australia with an Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT) score of >6 (women) >7 (men) were recruited to this parallel group, double-blind randomised controlled trial (RCT) May 2018-October 2019. Participants were allocated to the R2C cognitive and behavioural intervention (4-6 sessions with a counsellor plus R2C workbooks featuring mapping exercises; n=178) or control condition (four 5-minute telephone check-ins, alcohol guidelines/stress management pamphlets; n=166). Primary outcome was change in AUDIT score at 3-months post-baseline.

**Results:** 344 participants were randomised, mean age was 39.9 years (SD=11.4, 18-73 years), 51.5% were male. Under one-third (29.4%) had previously sought alcohol treatment, despite mean baseline AUDIT score of 21.5 (SD=6.3) and 63.4% scoring in the probable dependence range. Intention-to-treat analyses revealed a significantly greater reduction in alcohol problem severity in the R2C arm relative to control at 3-months (AUDIT; MD=2.02, p=0.004). There was a strong main effect of time on psychological distress at 3-months, which reduced for both treatment arms (Kessler Psychological Distress Scale; p<0.001). Retention at 3-month follow-up was 84.9%.

**Discussion/Conclusion:** R2C was found to be effective in reducing alcohol problem severity, demonstrating the benefit of this low-cost, scalable, telephone-delivered intervention.

**Practice/Policy Implications:** The outcomes of this trial provide support for an alternative model of alcohol treatment, and are anticipated to make a significant contribution to the health and wellbeing of Australians who are otherwise unlikely to seek treatment from traditional alcohol and other drug services.

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