

## **RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE: DEVELOPMENT OF THE ASSIST-LITE IN THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT TRAINING RESOURCE.**

**Authors:** Jennifer Harland<sup>1</sup>, Robert Ali<sup>1</sup> and Linda Gowing<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Discipline of Pharmacology, School of Medicine, University of Adelaide, South Australia, Australia.

**Presenter's email:** Jennifer.harland@adelaide.edu.au

**Introduction:** Substance use, primarily alcohol, is a factor in a substantial proportion of presentations to hospital emergency departments, but to date routine screening for Substance Use Disorders has not been widely adopted. Health professional's lack of confidence in asking about substance use plus the perceived time taken have been barriers to screening and brief intervention.

**Method:** A feasibility study was designed to have minimal impact on ED staff resources and time. ASSIST-Lite self-completion using a computer tablet was conducted at the RAH ED. It provided the user with an assessment of their risk and tailored brief advice based on that assessment. Of the 632 individuals approached, 75% agreed to participate.

**Key Findings:** The study found it was an acceptable method of engaging people, from a broad age range. Only 37.5% of those interviewed reported no risky substance involvement in the three months prior to interview. Forty one percent scored in the moderate risk range for at least one substance. This group is the principal target for brief advice. Of those, 40% had a moderate risk for an illicit substance. A further 22% scored at least one substance in the high-risk range, with around 20% of them scoring high risk for at least one illicit substance. This group is the principal target for referral to specialist assessment and treatment.

**Discussions and Conclusions:** Two thirds of the sample whose highest score was in the moderate risk range was for a single substance. This is operationally significant as it reduces the time needed to complete the intervention. Based on the findings, the ASSIST-Lite in the Emergency Department training resource (instructional video and manual) was developed to help health professionals conduct screening and brief interventions in time critical areas.

**Implications for Practice:** High rates of presentations at the ED with a coexisting substance use disorder warrants introducing routine screening. Self-completion of risk assessment with linked brief advice will minimise the impact on staff resources. The ASSIST-Lite in ED training resource provides targeted training for emergency department staff to enable the implementation of effective screening and brief intervention for substance use.

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