Age of initiation to alcohol and alcohol-related problems in early adulthood

Australian Parental Supply of Alcohol Longitudinal Study (APSALS)

- 1927 12-13 year-olds and their parents were recruited in 2010-2011 from 49 schools in NSW, WA and TAS
- Surveyed annually online or via mail (parents were surveyed until wave 5)
- At wave 8 (2017-2018) 1434 young people provided data (75% of original cohort)
  - Average age of 19.8 years
  - 51% female
  - 94% had initiated alcohol use by this time
% of drinkers initiating at each age

Age (years) | %
---|---
<=12 | 4.9%
13 | 4.4%
14 | 6.4%
15 | 11.6%
16 | 18.6%
17 | 23.8%
18 | 23.4%
19 | 6.0%
20+ | 0.8%

(n=1351)
Binge drinking over time, by age of initiation

- Initiated at 12-13y (n=126)
- Initiated at 14-15y (n=244)
- Initiated at 16-17y (n=573)
- Initiated at 18-19y (n=397)
Frequent binge drinking over time, by age of initiation

- Initiated at 12-13y (n=126)
- Initiated at 14-15y (n=244)
- Initiated at 16-17y (n=573)
- Initiated at 18-19y (n=397)
Is earlier initiation associated with binge drinking in early adulthood?

We examined the adjusted associations between age of initiation (<18 years vs 18+ years) and the frequency of binge drinking (Never vs Infrequent vs Frequent) at wave 8 (20 years old) (n=1261)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of initiation</th>
<th>Infrequent binge drinking</th>
<th>Frequent binge drinking</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RRR (99% CI)</td>
<td>RRR (99% CI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;18 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18+ years</td>
<td>0.45 (0.24-0.84)</td>
<td>0.12* (0.07-0.23)</td>
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*p<0.001
Delay alcohol initiation

• Binge drinking is a normative behaviour in Australian teenagers and young adults. Both those who initiated earlier, and initiated later were likely to be engaging in binge drinking at age 20.

• BUT, initiating alcohol prior to 18 years appeared to be linked with a more problematic pattern of alcohol use in early adulthood.

• Delaying initiation is the best option, but for the large numbers who initiate early we need effective prevention and harm reduction programs.
Conflict of Interest Disclosure

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These parties had no role in the study design, conduct and reporting.

All other authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.