

Characteristics of Young People at Index Alcohol-related Hospital Admissions and Emergency Department Presentations in Australia: a retrospective data linkage cohort

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Introduction and Aims: Alcohol use is the leading global risk factor for death and disease in young people. We examine: 1) Sociodemographic and clinical characteristics as correlates of age group at young peoples' index hospital admission or emergency department (ED) presentation with an alcohol-related problem; and 2) age group at index event as a predictor of rates of ED and hospital events within 12 months of separation from index.

Design and Methods: We used linked administrative data consisting of patients born between 1993 and 2001 who experienced an alcohol-related hospital/ED event between the ages of 12 and 20 years from 2005 to 2013 in New South Wales, Australia (n = 10300). Multinomial logistic regression models determined whether characteristics at index were associated with age group (early adolescent [12-14 years], late adolescent [15-17 years], young adult [18-20 years]). Incidence rates and rate ratios were calculated for subsequent ED and hospital events, compared across age group at index event.

Key Findings: Correlates of younger age at first event included: female sex, lower socioeconomic status, presenting to an ED, and presenting with more severe problems. Rates of subsequent 12-month ED and hospital events were similar across age groups but much higher than the general population, especially for patients aged 12-14 years at their first event.

Discussions and Conclusions: Our findings highlight the importance of abstaining from alcohol use in adolescence and support current Australian government guidelines to reduce the health risks of alcohol. Addressing alcohol-related harm among young people, particularly adolescents, can have substantial reductions in morbidity and healthcare costs.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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