

Controlled trial examining the strength-based Grit Wellbeing and Self-regulation Program for young people in residential settings for substance use

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Introduction and Aims: This cohort-controlled trial examined whether the 12-session strengths-based Grit wellbeing and self-regulation program enhanced the treatment outcomes of young people accessing residential treatment. Grit focuses on increasing mental and physical wellbeing and reducing substance use and mental health problems by building strengths, self-regulation skills, social connections and physical wellbeing.

Design and Method: Participants were young people (aged 18-35 years) accessing a six-week residential treatment program for substance use. Participants received standard treatment, or standard treatment plus Grit (two sessions/week for six weeks). Two primary substance use outcomes were examined: (i) global substance use and (ii) alcohol, methamphetamine and cannabis use involvement. Other outcomes included wellbeing, mental health (depression and anxiety) and vocational engagement in work or study. Participants were assessed at baseline, and 6-weeks and 3-months post-program enrolment.

Results: There were 194 (66% male, M_{age} 27.40) young people included in the study. The main drug of concern was methamphetamine (44.8%) followed by alcohol (34.5%). Comorbid mental health concerns were high. Results revealed that both groups showed a significant improvement in wellbeing, depressive and anxiety symptoms, and decreases in global, alcohol, cannabis, and methamphetamine use involvement scores at three months. The Grit group had a larger reduction in methamphetamine and cannabis use involvement compared to the control group. The improvements were maintained over the 12-month follow-up period.

Discussion and Conclusion: This study presents promising evidence that a six-week residential program can achieve improvements in AOD use, depression, anxiety, wellbeing and vocational engagement.

Implications for Practice or Policy: The Grit program may enhance such programs; particularly in relation to methamphetamine and cannabis use.

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