

## **Enhancing Access to Support Services for Families and Friends of People with Alcohol or Drug Concerns: Barriers, Facilitators and Recommendations**

SIYU QIAN<sup>1</sup>, DIANNE WOODS<sup>1</sup>, NHI NGUYEN<sup>2</sup>, KATE BOWLES<sup>2</sup>, RAEWYN WHITING<sup>3</sup>, SARAH ADAMS<sup>1</sup>, BRIONY LARANCE<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Drug and Alcohol Service, Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District, Wollongong, Australia, <sup>2</sup>School of the Arts, English and Media, University of Wollongong, Wollongong, Australia, <sup>3</sup>Family Drug Support, Leura, Australia, <sup>4</sup>School of Psychology, University of Wollongong, Wollongong, Australia

Presenters' emails: [siyu.qian@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:siyu.qian@health.nsw.gov.au)

**Introduction/Issues:** Families and friends of people with alcohol or drug (AOD) concerns experience negative impacts including increased stress and burden, impaired mental health and reduced quality of life. However, almost half of the affected families and friends were unlikely to access support services for themselves.

**Method/Approach:** Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with 41 participants supporting someone with AOD concerns. The participants were recruited from both government and non-government organisations that provided support services for the affected families and friends. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and content analysis was conducted.

**Key Findings:** Our interim analysis identified a range of barriers to access services including difficulty in finding available services, negative experience with contacting support services, not knowing whether a service was suitable, not enough services available in regional and rural area, most services only available during office hours, no time to attend a service due to other commitments, long travel distance and discomfort with service delivery methods. Facilitators to access services included being provided with the right information at the right time, being suggested by trusted others, feeling welcome at a service and the availability of after hour services. Participants recommended services to promote and advertise at various venues, provide a succinct, person-centred information package, provide assistance with attending the service and proactively offer group or counselling support when they accompanied their loved ones to attend a service.

**Discussions and Conclusions:** These barriers, facilitators and recommendations should be considered by support service managers to enhance service access.

**Disclosure of Interest Statement:** Participant reimbursement was provided by the Drug and Alcohol Service, Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District. No funding was received for the development of this study.