

BE A BROTHER; INSIGHTS FROM AN INNOVATIVE, HEALTH PROMOTION PROJECT TO REDUCE ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION IN YOUNG AFRICAN-AUSTRALIAN MEN

N Obrien¹, E Saleeba¹, L Gabb², E Deng², C Clark³

¹Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth), Carlton, Victoria, Australia

²Cohealth Arts Generator, Footscray, Victoria, Australia

³Victoria University

Introduction and Aim: Be a Brother is one of four successful projects awarded through VicHealth's Innovation Challenge on Alcohol - which called for ideas to help change Victoria's drinking culture by:

- Reducing the amount Victorians drink, particularly those who drink a lot, often, or;
- Increasing the acceptability of saying no to a drink, or drinking a bit less.

Be a Brother is led by cohealth Arts Generator and aims to make it socially acceptable amongst young African-Australian men to drink moderately, and spread the message that being a good 'brother' to their friends means supporting one another to drink less alcohol.

Method / Approach: cohealth worked closely with film-maker Ezeldin Deng and a group of young African Australians to create three short films that spreads the 'be a brother' message. Young African-Australian men engaged in risky drinking were encouraged to sign-up as 'brothers', then linked with trained peer mentors, who provided them with advice on how to reduce heavy drinking, delivered through SMS messaging and face to face support. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and focus groups, and analysed descriptively through content/theme analysis.

Key Findings: The evidence gathered from interviews and focus groups show an increase in social acceptability of moderate drinking and a reduction in alcohol consumption amongst the young men, as a result of the project.

Discussions and Conclusions: VicHealth's Innovation Challenge on Alcohol called for ideas to help change Victoria's drinking culture and cohealth's Be a Brother project demonstrates the potential of a participatory and innovative approach in influencing social acceptability and reducing alcohol consumption.

Implications for Practice or Policy:

The model of Be a Brother and the principle of those from affected communities being at the centre of the project ('by the community, for the community') – and recognising that they hold the solutions, is applicable to a wide range of communities and settings seeking to create positive change.

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