

DEVELOPING AN IPAD APP TO HELP ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AUSTRALIANS TO DESCRIBE THEIR DRINKING

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Background: People are asked to describe how much they drink in clinical settings or when they fill out surveys. National drinking surveys are used by governments to help allocate alcohol treatment funding. However researchers estimate that surveys on Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander drinking can be 'out' by a factor of seven. With NHMRC funding we set about designing and testing an iPad app to help people report their drinking more accurately.

Methods: We consulted with community representatives, health professionals and researchers. We considered internationally accepted approaches to measure consumption, harms and dependence. In a workshop, we asked community and health professionals about Aboriginal drinking styles and approaches to assess drinking.

Results: Indigenous Australians typically do not count their alcohol consumption in standard drinks. Remote drinkers may share alcohol and use atypical containers (e.g. empty juice bottles). English may be a second, third or fourth language. In remote or urban settings, consumption may vary with travel, who the drinker is with, and what is going on (e.g. celebration or funeral). With the help of technical experts and designers we have created a user-friendly app, with a combination of graphics, plain English text, and English and Aboriginal 'voice over'.

Conclusions: Assessment of drinking behaviour must consider cultural context. Electronic aids to alcohol history taking may reduce barriers like shame and may assist memory and recording. A tablet app to help self-report drinking in Indigenous Australians may have broader use, including in non-English speaking or marginalised groups.