

WORKPLACE INTERVENTIONS CAN BE EFFECTIVE: EVIDENCE FROM THE WORKPLACE REDUCTION OF ALCOHOL-RELATED HARM PROJECT (WRAHP)

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Introduction and Aims: While the majority of Australians who drink at risky levels are employed, evidence concerning the effectiveness of workplace interventions is scarce. To address this, an in-situ three-year trial involving the implementation and evaluation of a comprehensive alcohol harm reduction strategy was undertaken in Australian manufacturing workplaces.

Design and Methods: A comparative study design was employed with two intervention and two comparison worksites. A tailored strategy, based on a cultural model of work-related alcohol use and informed by an initial gap analysis, was implemented and assessed over a three-year period. The intervention involved 1) development and dissemination of a workplace AOD policy and procedures, 2) an employee education program, 3) a supervisor/manager training program, and 4) establishment of an employee referral pathway. Data were collected at three time-points: pre-intervention baseline (T1), at 12-months (T2) and 24-months post baseline (T3).

Key Findings: Among the intervention group, there was a significant T1-T3 increase in levels of AOD policy awareness ($p < .001$) and employee assistance awareness ($p < .001$) and a significant decline in the proportion of workers who drank heavily ($p = .006$), came to work with a hangover ($p = .015$), or were involved in an accident or near miss due to another worker's alcohol use ($p = .04$).

Discussions and Conclusions: Findings of the current study indicate that workplace policies that are comprehensive and tailored to meet the needs of individual workplaces can be effective in reducing risky alcohol use and related harm. This is one of the few workplace studies undertaken demonstrating significant effects. It provides a strong and encouraging evidence base for future initiatives.

Implications for Practice or Policy: There is little research being done in this area and to our knowledge this is the first study of its kind in Australia.

Implications for Translational Research: This project has developed practical guidelines that will be used to translate workplace alcohol and drug interventions for Australian workplaces.

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