

EMBARGOED:

Wednesday 11 November 2015, 12.01am AEDT

MEDIA RELEASE

OMG! Using hand held tablets and text messaging to reduce risky drinking and alcohol-related violence

Using technology, including computer tablets in emergency departments and SMS messaging at our universities, to reduce the harms from risky drinking for young people are central themes of presentations by two international speakers at a conference in Perth tomorrow [Wed Nov 11].

University of Michigan Medical School Professor Rebecca Cunningham will tell 380 delegates at the 2015 APSAD [Australasian Professional Society on Alcohol and other Drugs] conference that a visit to the Emergency Department (ED) is an opportunity to engage with young people at risk for alcohol use and violence.

“The U-Connect project showed that counselling sessions delivered on a laptop while young people were in ED decreased alcohol consumption and alcohol-related harms,” Professor Cunningham says. “And the SafERteens brief counselling session, also delivered in ED, decreased youth fighting and dating violence. “We are now moving to augment these with SMS messages to reach the teens who need them most.”

Ben Riordan, from the University of Otago, will outline results of an intervention that sent text messages to university students during Orientation Week.

“The messages mentioned the social consequences of alcohol use, such as ‘Don’t be a dick! Your drinking can affect your mates.’ Female students who received the texts reduced their drinking during Orientation Week, and both female and male students drank less during the rest of the academic year,” Mr Riordan said. “It appears new students define their university alcohol use patterns during Orientation Week so this may be a critical time to deliver prevention strategies to reduce student drinking and consequent harms.”

Other highlights from Wednesday’s program

- [Anthony Shakeshaft](#), National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, UNSW
11am: *Effectiveness and costs of community-based interventions for reducing alcohol harms: an examination of Australia’s alcohol action in rural communities (AARC) randomised controlled trial in the international context*: AARC is the largest community-wide cluster RCT ever undertaken internationally aimed at reducing population level rates of risky drinking and alcohol-related harms
- [Stephen Bright](#), Curtin University
Noon: *“Won’t somebody think about the children?” Alcohol and other drug moral panics*: Drug-related moral panics and media reporting can act as an ‘advertisement’ for a drug, increasing perceived prevalence of use
- [Ken Pidd](#), NCETA
11.15am: *Age and gender differences in levels of cannabis use and beliefs about cannabis use in Australia*: Cannabis use in older Australians has risen significantly
- 1.30pm: *Accessing the inaccessible: Engaging male-dominated workplaces in alcohol and drug intervention programs*: The first study of its kind in Australia
- Frank Borg, [Caraniche](#)
1.15pm: *Working with methamphetamine users*: Trends in use and ‘meth’-specific treatment approaches
- [Amanda Baker](#), University of Newcastle
11.30am: *SMART Recovery: the evidence base worldwide, and how research into facilitators’ and other stakeholders’ experience of the groups informed program development*: New research into SMART Recovery

For further information or interviews, or to register to attend conference sessions, please contact:

APSAD 2015 Media Liaison

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Note: Media will not be admitted to conference sessions without registration, Perth is 3 hours behind AEDST

For APSAD 2015 [Conference Program](#) and [Abstracts](#) visit www.apsadconference.com.au

Note: Due to flight delays, Rebecca Cunningham will be available after 2.30pm WST today (Tuesday)