

TITLE: Improving the implementation of responsible alcohol management practices by community sporting clubs: a randomised controlled trial

Authors: Melanie Kingsland*,^{1,2} Luke Wolfenden,^{1,2} Jennifer Tindall,² Bosco Rowland,³ Karen Gillham,² Maree Sidey,⁴ Patrick McElduff,¹ John H Wiggers^{1,2}

¹ School of Medicine and Public Health, The University of Newcastle, University Drive, Callaghan, New South Wales, 2308, Australia

² Hunter New England Population Health, Locked Bag 10, Wallsend, New South Wales, 2287, Australia

³ Deakin University, Burwood Highway, Burwood, Victoria, 3125, Australia

⁴ Australian Drug Foundation, Level 12, 607 Bourke St, Melbourne, Victoria, 3125, Australia

*corresponding/presenting author

Background: Excessive alcohol consumption and alcohol related harm is particularly prevalent among members of sporting groups, and at sporting venues. Studies of public drinking venues have found that managing the sale, supply, promotion and consumption of alcohol is effective in reducing such harm. Despite this, sporting clubs frequently fail to implement alcohol management practice consistent with liquor legislation and best practice guidelines.

Aim: To assess the impact of a multi-strategic intervention in improving the implementation of responsible alcohol management practices by community sports clubs.

Methods: A parallel group randomised controlled trial was conducted with 87 community football clubs. A multi-strategic implementation intervention to support clubs to undertake responsible alcohol management practices was developed based on implementation and capacity building theory and frameworks. Implementation strategies included dedicated support from an implementation support officer, implementation funding, accreditation rewards, printed resources, observational audit feedback, newsletters, online training and support from state sporting organisations. Interviews were undertaken with club presidents from intervention and control clubs at baseline and following two years of intervention to assess alcohol management practice implementation. The perceived usefulness of, and satisfaction with, implementation strategies were also assessed.

Results: Compared to clubs allocated to the control group (65%), at post-intervention, a significantly greater proportion of intervention group clubs (88%) reported implementing '13 or more' of the 16 responsible alcohol management strategies (OR: 3.7 [95% CI:1.1-13.2]; p=0.04). Subgroup analyses revealed a greater intervention effect in larger clubs and clubs in areas with higher socio-economic classification. All intervention components were considered highly useful, with the implementation support officer rated the most useful, followed by implementation funding and accreditation rewards. Three-quarters or more of clubs rated the amount of intervention support to be sufficient, however over 20% rated the amount of implementation funding and support from state sporting organisations to be insufficient.

Conclusions: The findings suggest that the multi-strategic implementation intervention was successful in improving alcohol management practices in community sports clubs. Further research is required to better understand implementation barriers and to assess the long-term sustainability of the implemented practices.