

Brief counselling by a doctor can reduce drinking

Peer reviewed: Yes

Type of study: Systematic review

Subject of study: People

A new systematic review and meta-analysis has found that alcohol-targeted brief interventions (short, structured, one-to-one conversations about drinking designed to motivate changes in risky behaviour) delivered in doctors' offices and similar medical settings can produce small but useful reductions in drinking.

Published in the scientific journal *Addiction*, this review synthesized findings from 116 trials and 64,439 total participants to estimate the efficacy of brief interventions for alcohol and other drug use, delivered in general medical settings. Alcohol-targeted brief interventions yielded small beneficial effects on alcohol use, equivalent to a reduction in 1 drinking day per month. Interestingly, the findings were inconclusive for brief interventions delivered in emergency department/trauma centers but were effective when delivered in other general medical settings (e.g., a primary care clinic). There was limited evidence regarding the effects of drug-targeted brief interventions on drug use.

Lead author Emily Tanner-Smith comments: "A reduction of one drinking day per month may not sound like much, but small individual reductions can add up to a substantial reduction in population level harms. Given their brevity, low cost, and minimal clinician effort, brief interventions may be a promising way to reduce alcohol use, one patient at a time."

-- Ends --

For editors:

This paper is free to download for one month from the Wiley Online Library:

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/add.15674> or by contacting Jean O'Reilly, Editorial Manager, *Addiction*, jean@addictionjournal.org.

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