

Twelve-month Outcomes of a Two-Stage Social Network Intervention Aimed at Reducing Heavy Drinking among Residential College Students

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Introduction: Social influence from peers is a strong predictor of alcohol-use among emerging adults. As such, alcohol interventions that utilize social influence may be effective among young people. This study aimed to establish feasibility and preliminary efficacy for a two-stage social-network intervention (SNI) for alcohol-use in residential colleges. Stage 1 was a peer-led harm-minimisation workshop. Stage 2 was a SNI, in which network analysis was used to identify influential students to receive an alcohol intervention.

Method: In February 2021, four colleges were recruited. Stage 1 was delivered to the first-year network at all colleges ($N = 543$). Stage 2 was delivered to the largest first-year network only. To identify influential students, we collected social network data at 4-weeks, and used a method called 'Strategic Players' (Ott et al., 2018) to identify 60 students to receive QuikFix intervention (Hides et al., 2014). Participants completed follow-ups at 3-, 6-, 12-months.

Key Findings: Feasibility was established by high enrolment ($N = 507$; 94%) and follow-up rates (85%; 12-months). To establish efficacy, we isolated a gender-balanced sub-sample (the two co-educational cohorts) and used a mixed effects repeated measures model to compare outcomes of the Stage 1 intervention (workshop-only) to the Stage 1+2 intervention (workshop plus targeted SNI), on the primary variable (ASSIST alcohol total). There was a significant time by treatment interaction that was maintained at 12-months. The workshop-only cohort showed significantly higher ASSIST alcohol scores than the Workshop + Targeted SNI cohort at all follow-ups, despite both cohorts having equivalent drinking at baseline.

Discussion and Conclusions: While conclusions are limited by the uncontrolled nature of this study, results provide preliminary evidence for the feasibility and efficacy of the 2-stage SNI for mitigating onset of heavy drinking.

Implications for Translational Research. This intervention could be trialed in other contexts to reduce risky-drinking in youth-networks.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: None to declare.

References

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