

INFLUENCES ON PARENTAL ALCOHOL SUPPLY AND NON-SUPPLY DECISIONS – QUALITATIVE INSIGHTS

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Introduction / Issues: Adolescents are particularly vulnerable to harms from alcohol (e.g., adverse neural, cognitive, and behavioural outcomes). However, parents are the most common source of alcohol supply for Australian adolescent drinkers, suggesting parental beliefs and supply practices are inconsistent with current evidence. This study investigated parental awareness of drinking guidelines, alcohol-related information seeking practices, and perceptions of harms for adolescents, and the impact of these factors on alcohol supply/non-supply decisions.

Method / Approach: In-depth interviews were conducted with 40 parents (43% fathers) of adolescents aged 12-17 years, purposively sampled across three Australian states. The 'capability', 'opportunity', 'motivation' and 'behaviour' (COM-B) model of behaviour change was used to guide framework analyses.

Key Findings: In both unprompted and prompted responses, potential neurodevelopmental and cognitive effects were highly salient for parents and perceived to be permanent (unlike other health outcomes). Awareness of other health impacts and drinking guidelines varied considerably, being most pronounced in the jurisdiction with established, parent-targeted social marketing campaigns on alcohol-related harm. Parents strongly endorsed resources that recommend delaying use until 18 years, consistent with NHMRC guidelines, reinforcing parental non-supply decisions, and providing adolescent-specific statistics of harms, delivered via social media and school-based sources.

Discussion and Conclusions: In this qualitative study, supply decisions were shaped considerably by perceptions of health effects, with guidelines having less impact. Future research should consider personal influences on parental supply decisions, such as parents' own alcohol use experiences and perceived pressures from adolescents' peers to supply alcohol.

Implications for Practice or Policy: Findings highlight the importance of comprehensive public health approaches targeting both parental and teen drinking awareness and attitudes. Education campaigns targeting parents are likely to increase awareness of adverse health

effects and reduce parental supply of alcohol to adolescents, particularly in jurisdictions with no current mass media campaign activity.