

Addressing Workforce Gaps: Evaluation of the New South Wales Education in Addiction Program (NEAP)

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Background: In New South Wales (NSW), there is increasing unmet demand for alcohol and other drug (AOD) treatment services, in part caused by difficulties in the recruitment and retention of skilled clinicians and limited access to professional development—particularly in regional settings [1].

Description of Intervention: To address these gaps, the NSW Education in Addiction Program (NEAP), a Ministry of Health-funded program, was established in 2024. NEAP is a weekly virtual education program for AOD doctors and specialist nurses across NSW. Sessions run for 75 minutes and cover clinical topics in addiction medicine.

Effectiveness: An online survey was distributed to all 549 registered participants in September 2025, collecting data on demographics, attendance patterns, and satisfaction with session content, delivery, and logistics. Descriptive statistics and multivariable logistic regression were utilised to summarise responses and examine associations between participant characteristics and satisfaction ratings. 186 participants responded (34%), with roughly equal numbers from metropolitan and rural areas. Overall satisfaction rate was very high: 99% satisfied or very satisfied, and 98% agreed sessions were clinically relevant. There was no association between satisfaction and demographics, including type of profession, years of AOD experience, or rurality. Regular attendance was consistently associated with higher satisfaction across survey measures.

Conclusion and Next Steps: NEAP demonstrates that a funded, state-wide virtual model can deliver equitable, high-quality AOD clinical education. The association between attendance frequency and satisfaction suggests that supporting regular engagement is a priority for future program development.

Implications on communities, practice, policy and/or First Nations communities: NEAP provides a scalable model for supporting AOD workforce retention, including in underserved areas, and has the potential to improve access to quality AOD care. This evaluation supports the case for sustained government funding of coordinated state-wide AOD clinical education initiatives.

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References

1. Centre for Alcohol and Other Drugs. NSW Alcohol and Other Drugs Workforce Strategy 2024-2032. Sydney, NSW; 2024.