

Entering residential withdrawal treatment settings: An Australian qualitative study of clients' experiences of waiting, intake, and assessment prior to treatment admission

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Introduction / Issues: *Residential withdrawal (i.e., detox) services form an important part of Australian alcohol and other drug (AOD) treatment. Although 'wait lists' are part of the admission process, little is known about clients' experiences of waiting. This qualitative study aims to explore clients' experiences of waiting to get admitted into detox settings, including potential positive/negative affordances of waiting, and their views about how better supports could be offered during waiting pre-admission.*

Method / Approach: *Participants were recruited from four services in Melbourne. Sixteen participants with varying AOD concerns participated in semi-structured interviews exploring their experiences of waiting.*

Key Findings OR Results: *Our work explores how clients: (1) experienced negative effects of waiting to enter detox settings such as frustration, and alcohol and other drug harms; (2) how wait lists afforded benefits, including an opportunity for a holistic client assessment, and a chance to organise personal affairs prior to admission; and, (3) viewed a range of improvements to pre-admission processes, including increased service engagement with regular check-ins and communication with services.*

Discussions and Conclusions: *Our analysis highlights how wait lists afford clients negative and/or positive experiences, depending on their context and treatment goals. Whilst cutting wait times is often raised as a policy imperative, we discuss how wait lists serve different functions for different people, some of which are personally beneficial and convenient. We reflect on the implications of our analysis for AOD treatment, specifically how services might attend to the needs of clients during their pre-admission wait.*

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