

Effective Public Health Practice Project Summary Statement



This is a summary statement written to condense the work of the authors of a systematic review. The reference for the full review is below. The intent of this summary is to provide an overview of the findings and implications of the full review. For more information on individual studies included in the review, please see the review itself.

Reference: Fitzpatrick-Lewis, D.J.; Thomas, H.; Washik, K. (2008) The effectiveness of interventions in the workplace to reduce substance misuse (alcohol and drugs). Effective Public Health Practice Project, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario.

Issue: An important goal of public health is to reduce the severity and impact of preventable injuries and of substance misuse (Ontario Public Health Standards, 2007). The use of alcohol has been linked to a number of chronic diseases including: cardiovascular disease, some cancers, gastrointestinal conditions, psychiatric disorders, injuries and/or death through vehicle collisions or self-harm and many anti-social behaviours (Babor et al., 2003). As well, alcohol use has negative impacts on/in the workplace. Empirical evidence points to an association between alcohol and work related problems, however, the direction and nature of causality is less clear (Rehm and Rossow, 2001). Alcohol use is a contributing factor in some workplace accidents, absenteeism, attrition, disciplinary problems, theft, poor morale and lower productivity (Babor et al., 2003). Bennett and Lehman (1998) identified that alcohol misuse in the workplace causes approximately 40% of co-workers to experience at least one negative consequence in association with a person's substance misuse.

Statistics also indicate that illegal drug misuse among Canadians increased between 1992 and 2002 (Rehm, J. et. al., 2006, CCSA). The Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse found that of the \$39.8 billion total social cost of substance misuse, the harm created by illegal drug use accounted for \$8.2 billion (20.7%). 'Social cost' refers to indirect costs (such as productivity loss), direct health care costs, law enforcement costs and other direct costs related to substance misuse among Canadians.

Workplaces seeking to address health and safety concerns may benefit from a review looking at the question of effectiveness of interventions in the workplace in reducing substance misuse.

Review Content Summary: To be considered relevant studies had to meet all of the following criteria: the intervention described could be implemented, facilitated or promoted by staff in local public health units in Canada, the study population was adults in the workplace, the reported study outcome(s) included behaviour change in regard to substance use and the primary study design was prospective and included a control group. Potentially relevant articles (n=261) were retrieved. Of these, 16 relevant articles were quality assessed. Methodologically, zero articles rated strong, eight rated moderate, and eight were weak. Data were extracted from the moderate studies and were synthesized in a narrative format. Seven of eight included studies were RCTs.

Comments on this review’s methodology: Six databases were searched for the period 1990-2007 to locate relevant primary studies. Peer review journals were hand-searched for the period January to September 2007. Reference lists of all retrieved articles were searched for relevant studies. Primary studies were assessed for relevance and methodological quality using standardized tools. Two reviewers rated each article independently. Differences were resolved through discussion. Data were extracted from the methodologically moderate studies using a standardized instrument. A narrative synthesis was presented.

Evidence and implications for practice and policy

Evidence points ARE NOT weighted or ranked according to strength.

Evidence	Implications
Two studies showed an increased desire to reduce substance misuse behaviour.	Program development based on the transtheoretical model of behaviour change should be incorporated.
One study with an educational component increased awareness of workplace substance use/misuse policies.	Workplace policies to address substance misuse need to be clear and specific. Employees need to be oriented/educated on workplace policies that address substance misuse.
“Team Awareness” which combined interactive activities such as role playing with a didactic approach was more effective at producing positive results than educational sessions alone.	Intervention/program development should utilize adult education principles.
Included studies were implemented in the United States, France, Japan and Australia.	There is a need for research that is specific to the Canadian workplace and health system.
Interventions pointed to some promising practice, however, they should be viewed with caution due to the methodological issues within the primary studies.	Research in this area needs have greater methodological rigour.
Promising interventions were brief interventions with short follow-up period.	Those interventions need to be implemented for longer and sustained time periods with longer follow-up. Fundors can support this type of research by reformulating the funding protocols that would allow for long-term follow-up; perhaps up to 10 years.
<p><i>General Implications: There are some interventions that show promising results, however, those are based on short-term outcome measures of reduced alcohol consumption. Much of the social harm and economic cost of substance misuse is caused by moderate users who engage in risky behaviours. Public health can play a substantive role in the development of policies around substance misuse and in strong social marketing campaigns to raise awareness within the general population.</i></p>	

Cost Benefit or Cost-Effectiveness Information: no information available

References Used to Outline Issue:

Babor, T., Caetano, R., Casswell, S., Edwards, G., Giesbrecht, N., Graham, K., Grube, J., Gruenewald, P., Hill, L., Holder, H., Homel, R., Österberg, E., Rehm, J., Room, R., Rossow, I. (2003) Alcohol: No ordinary commodity. New York: Oxford Medical Publications.

Bennett, J.B. and Lehman, W.E.K. (1998) Workplace drinking climate, stress and problem indicators: Assessing the influence of teamwork (group cohesion). *Journal of Studies in Alcohol*, 59 (5), pp. 608-619.

Ontario Public Health Standards, 2007

Rehm, J. and Rossow, I. (2001) The impact of alcohol consumption on work and education. In: Geml, G. and Klingeman, H. (eds) Mapping the social consequences of alcohol consumption, pp. 67-77. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Weeks, J., Rehm, J., and Mugford, R. (2007) Prescription drug abuse FAQs. Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse. www.ccsa.ca/CCSA/EN/Publications/. Downloaded 02/03/2008.

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