

Nurses and alcohol: Do we have a problem?

Dr Adam Searby

President, DANA

Institute for Health Transformation,
School of Nursing and Midwifery,
Deakin University, Australia



INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH
TRANSFORMATION



Unsplash: Ilona Frey

[It] definitely wasn't discussed that as a nurse you will definitely be exposed to a high level of stress in almost any job that you have and you should really keep an eye on your alcohol consumption, not that I would say that I didn't actually consume more than recommended before I did my nursing degree.

(Searby, Burr and Redley, 2022)

Previous research

- Perry et al (2018) found risky drinking habits, defined as more than two standard alcoholic drinks per day on average or more than four standard drinks on a single occasion monthly, in 16.2% of a sample of 5041 nurses in a broader survey of lifestyle habits conducted between June 2014 and February 2015.
- Sheard et al (2014) explored alcohol consumption amongst 44 military nurses from Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, finding 20% consumed more than daily recommend guidelines
- Smith (2007) found a prevalence of medium to high-risk alcohol consumption of 11.2% among nurses (2004-2005 data)





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Nullam, Dictum

FOLLOW



The Booze-less Drinking Game



What do our drinking habits say about us?



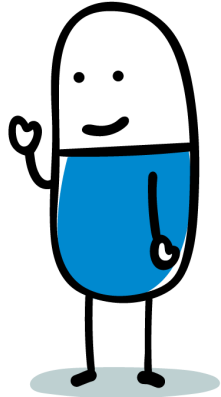
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The Booze-less Drinking Game

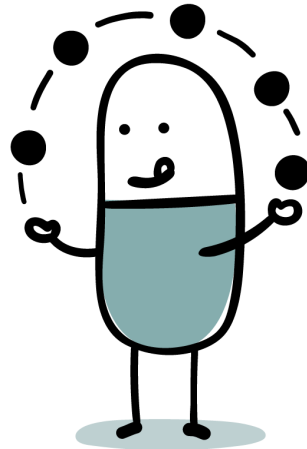
The Baseline



The Baseline is as social as anyone but prefers to stay relatively (or totally) dry... even when things get a bit stormy. Not just a designated driver but an obligated observer, The Baseline knows that their unimpeded view means they are best placed to look out for their mates.

The Booze-less Drinking Game

The Moderator



The Moderator knows how to keep up with the gang, but also generally knows when it's time to put the cork back in the bottle. Sometimes the cork finds its way back out... but The Moderator knows that this is the time when the balance could quickly tip from having a good time, to getting blind.

The Booze-less Drinking Game

The Highliner



The Highliner is no stranger to unwinding with a few cold ones... and then maybe a few more. It's not that The Highliner doesn't know when to stop drinking—it's just that sometimes the true level is only noticeable when it's already gone too high.

The Booze-less Drinking Game

The Topper



The Topper is always up for another round, but the rounds just tend to keep on rolling on when everyone else has gone home. And OK—maybe those rounds keep rolling at home, too. For The Topper, once upon a time drinking may have been fun, but these days it feels more like playing with fire.

Alcohol consumption

- 1,159 responses after data cleaning
 - 90.8% female
 - Mean age 44.74 (SD 12.06)
 - Mean experience 20.38 years (SD 13.38)
 - 91% registered nurses
 - 6.1% enrolled nurses
 - 2.9% nurse practitioners

(Searby, Burr, Taylor, Aitken & Redley, 2023)

Alcohol consumption

- Mean AUDIT score across participants: 7.15 (SD 6.11), range 0 to 34
 - Males reported significantly higher mean AUDIT scores (9.82, SD 6.7; $H^{(2)} = 28.293, p < .001$)
 - No significant difference between profession/registration status (RN, EN, or NP)
 - Median weekly alcohol consumption 2-4 times per week
 - Median per occasion consumption of 3-4 standard drinks

(Searby, Burr, Taylor, Aitken & Redley, 2023)

Alcohol consumption

- Score 0: 3.6% (no alcohol consumption)
- Score 1-7: 59.4% (low risk)
- Score 8-15: 26.2% (risky or hazardous)
- Score 16-19: 5.5% (high risk or harmful)
- Score 20+: 5.3% (high risk, almost certainly dependent)

37%

(Searby, Burr, Taylor, Aitken & Redley, 2023)

| Setting | n | M | SD | 95% CI Lower | 95% CI Upper | Min AUDIT score | Max AUDIT score |
|--|-----|-------|------|--------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Emergency department | 140 | 10.07 | 7.42 | 8.83 | 11.31 | 0 | 33 |
| Palliative care | 4 | 9.50 | 7.23 | -2.01 | 21.01 | 3 | 18 |
| Dialysis unit | 6 | 9.33 | 8.82 | 0.07 | 18.59 | 1 | 25 |
| Intensive care unit | 43 | 9.26 | 7.04 | 7.09 | 11.42 | 0 | 29 |
| Aged care | 16 | 9.00 | 7.79 | 4.85 | 13.15 | 1 | 26 |
| Rehabilitation unit | 14 | 8.71 | 6.78 | 4.80 | 12.63 | 1 | 25 |
| Rural/remote nursing | 22 | 8.59 | 5.60 | 6.11 | 11.08 | 0 | 23 |
| Sexual Health | 12 | 8.50 | 3.80 | 6.08 | 10.92 | 3 | 16 |
| Mental health (inpatient) | 31 | 7.87 | 7.54 | 5.10 | 10.64 | 0 | 29 |
| Medical/surgical ward/unit | 139 | 7.81 | 6.09 | 6.79 | 8.83 | 0 | 30 |
| Other hospital | 6 | 7.67 | 4.46 | 2.99 | 12.34 | 3 | 12 |
| Oncology | 23 | 7.61 | 7.41 | 4.40 | 10.82 | 0 | 26 |
| Alcohol and other drug treatment service | 58 | 7.34 | 5.60 | 5.87 | 8.82 | 0 | 28 |

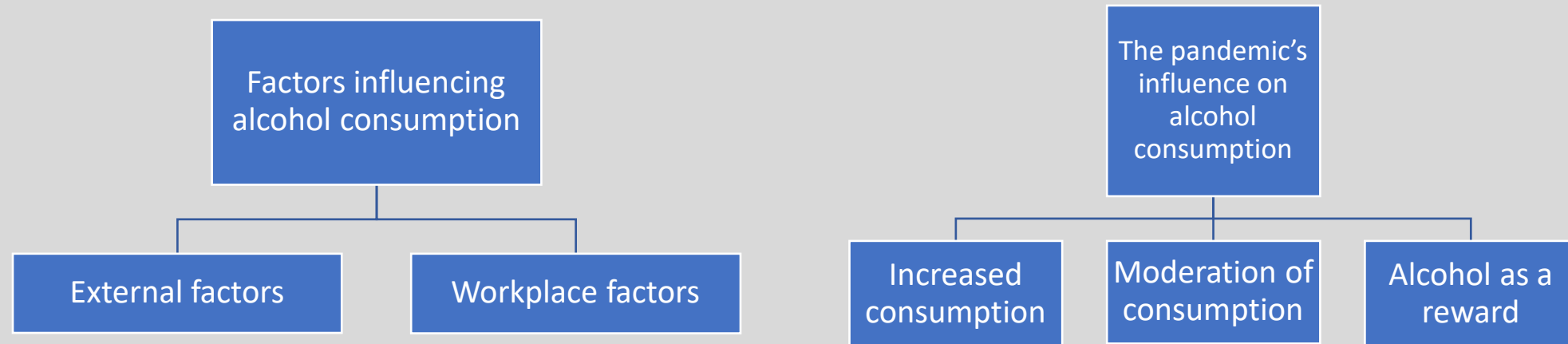
Work settings with higher AUDIT scores:

Significantly higher perceived stress ($F(34, 1171) = 2.441, p < .001$)

COVID

- Exploration of long-term impact of COVID-19 on nurse alcohol consumption
- Qualitative interviews (N=42)

COVID



(Searby, Burr and Redley, 2022)

COVID: influencing factors

- Workplace influencing factors:
 - Staff redeployment
 - Overtime, staff shortages
 - Uncertainty
- External influencing factors:
 - Isolation/lockdowns
 - Inability to participate in previous activities (i.e. exercise)
 - Home schooling

(Searby, Burr and Redley, 2022)

COVID: pandemic influences

- Increased consumption
 - *At the start we were so quiet because people stopped presenting to hospital. [Work was] dead and everyone was getting time off, so we were drinking a bit more. And then when we started getting slammed, because they'd put a pause on all the elective surgery, so when all they started coming in as emergencies was when it picked up as well. And then you have a really bad shift and then you come home and just take the edge off. (Participant 39)*
- Moderation of consumption

(Searby, Burr and Redley, 2022)

COVID: pandemic influences

- Alcohol as a reward
 - *I didn't have lunch, didn't have time, you know, what are you taking for lunch, oh I'm not I don't have time to eat it. What do you mean, you've got to have a lunch break, you know? I think resentment made me think oh I've got to have a drink, yeah ... so there's the reward. I'll pat myself on the back ... nearly everyone I've spoken with from nursing to any other profession have been drinking more during COVID ... it's incredible, yeah. (Participant 33)*

(Searby, Burr and Redley, 2022)

How much can I drink?

For more information visit nhmrc.gov.au/alcohol



Healthy adults

No more than 10 standard drinks per week, with no more than 4 on a single day



Children and people under 18 years of age, pregnant and breastfeeding mothers

None, zero, zip, zilch!



What are the guidelines?

- Survey of 1,159 nurses

| Response | n (%) |
|--|-------------|
| Yes; no more than two standard drinks per day and four on any one occasion | 434 (37.8%) |
| Yes; no more than ten standard drinks per week and four per day | 101 (8.8%) |
| Yes; no more than 28 standard drinks per week for men, and 14 standard drinks per week for women | 11 (1%%) |
| I am not sure what the guidelines state | 602 (52.4%) |

(Searby, Burr and Redley, 2022)

What are the guidelines?

- Unaware/uncertain:
 - *“Not really. I don’t look at all the details. Not really.” (Participant 7)*
 - *“... not that I could tell you exactly how many now ... I would imagine that the recommendation is that no more than four standard drinks in one sitting, maybe even three.” (Participant 2)*
 - *I have no idea but I would imagine that, I know that you shouldn’t have, you should have two alcohol-free days a week and I think for us, for women, it may be one glass of wine a night. (Participant 41)*

(Searby, Burr and Redley, 2022)

What are the guidelines?

- Beliefs:
 - *It's just very sterile. A lot of it's not real life, and it's almost like your parents telling you not to drink. (Participant 39)*
 - *I can have three or four standard drinks and sometimes not feel inebriated or tipsy at all, and like I said sometimes I can have 10 standard drinks in a night and dance around and have fun with my friends and be totally fine if it's within a lengthy timeframe... So, I feel like those recommendations are just made by someone that just doesn't understand. (Participant 2)*
 - *I don't know if I'm allowed to say it, but it really pisses me off because we all know that the really, the only safe amount is no alcohol at all. (Participant 38)*

(Searby, Burr and Redley, 2022)

#4. K-Blocker

It's so simple, it's genius. And it's the single most effective productivity app available on the iOS App Store. Install K-Blocker on your iPhone, and then surf the web with Safari, knowing that your experience will be free of all Kardashian-related content. No Kylie, no Kim, no Kendall, no Khloe, or even Kanye. It's like having your own virtual safe space from the kinds of news and stories that we have no interest in—and yet can't look away.



Will nurses use apps?

- *I'm a big lover of apps, and technology in general, so I think apps work well because they're on your personal phone and they can be accessed when it suits you ... as opposed to another bullshit mandatory training that you do annually in a workplace. (Participant 19)*

(Searby, Burr and Redley, 2022 (under review))

Will nurses use apps?

- *The thing is because a lot of nurses ... they're great at giving advice, but taking it is another thing. They always say that nurses don't make the best patients for a reason. I think nurses may get defensive if approached about their alcohol consumption, and try and rationalise it and reason about why they drink ... I think an app would be good for those that can see the whole picture, those are mindful that those ... if I started drinking three or four times a week, I feel like if I was concerned, an app would be great. But if you're not concerned about it yourself, then even if someone points it out, I think the first reaction is defensive. (Participant 4)*

(Searby, Burr and Redley, 2022 (under review))

Will nurses use apps?

- *The jaded old nurses like me, who are just “Look, I know what to say and I know what thing and I know what the risks are and I’m still going to do this behaviour,” they’ve missed the boat with us. It’s those younger people who probably aren’t drinking like we did in the olden days anyway. Giving them that really jazzy sort of thing and saying, “Hey look, this is a bit of health information and this is what you tell your patients.” You’re probably going to get a lot more buy-in and more success with that group than you are trying to convert the 50 years old’s who like to get home and have my glasses of wine, thanks very much. (Participant 24)*

(Searby, Burr and Redley, 2022 (under review))

What's next?

- Cross sectional data
 - Repeat survey to determine whether consumption rates have changed
- What would the perfect app look like?
 - Modified Delphi study with 16 experienced AOD treatment nurses
- App abandonment
 - Exploring reasons why people stop using apps
- What could be better than an app?
 - Exploring alternative interventions with target groups (i.e., grads)

Understanding drinking cultures among nurses: an ethnographic study.



Study aims

- learn important new knowledge on the sociocultural practices, meanings, and settings that shape drinking among nurses;
- better understand benefits and problems that may be experienced as effects of drinking cultures among these groups;
- and identify opportunities to promote positive and healthy encounters with alcohol.



We are looking for nurses who attend after-work drinks!

- We want to learn about what nurses ***actually do*** when they drink together.
- We're looking to develop our understanding by **joining in on nurses' drinking events** over the course of several months.
- For around one night a week or fortnight, a member of our research team would come along to your work-related drinking sessions.
- Participation is voluntary. We use strict confidentiality and anonymity procedures.
- The project has received ethics approval (HEC22300).

If you are interested in participating, or would like to know more please contact:

Dr. Nyssa Ferguson

n.ferguson@latrobe.edu.au



Thank you

a.searby@deakin.edu.au

president@danaonline.org