Evaluating alcohol intoxication management services: the EDARA mixed-methods study

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Declared competing interests of authors: Steve Goodacre is chairperson of the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Health Technology Assessment (HTA) programme Commissioning Committee (2019 to present), deputy director of the HTA programme (2019–present), a member of the HTA Funding Boards Policy Group (2016 to present) and chairperson of the NIHR Clinical Trials Unit Standing Advisory Committee (2019 to present).

Disclaimer: This report contains transcripts of interviews conducted in the course of the research and contains language that may offend some readers.

Published June 2020
DOI: 10.3310/hsdr08240

Plain English summary

The EDARA mixed-methods study
Health Services and Delivery Research 2020; Vol. 8: No. 24
DOI: 10.3310/hsdr08240

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Night-time environments are associated with alcohol use and related harms. Alcohol can make people ill and they may need assistance from health-care, ambulance and police services. Space in which these people can recover is lacking and many attend an accident and emergency department, which affects other patients. Some cities have developed alcohol intoxication management services, which provide space into which patients can be referred and which have staff who can look after these patients. It is not known if alcohol intoxication management services are effective, cost-effective, acceptable to people who use them or improve the accident and emergency department environment. This evaluation considers whether alcohol intoxication management services make a difference to health services. We interviewed and observed people who work in night-time environments, surveyed patients in alcohol intoxication management services and accident and emergency departments and analysed accident and emergency department and ambulance data. Alcohol intoxication management services were acceptable to patients and staff but did not benefit from agreed national standards and vary considerably in the services they provide. We were unable to provide consistent evidence that alcohol intoxication management services divert patients away from accident and emergency departments. However, alcohol intoxication management services led by nurse practitioners, though more expensive to run, are likely to be the most effective, and, although the costs of alcohol intoxication management services are greater than the savings made from avoided costs of emergency department attendances, alcohol intoxication management services led by nurse practitioners have the lowest cost per attendance avoided of the alcohol intoxication management services examined. Ambulance response times improved in cities with alcohol intoxication management services, and there are probably other, unmeasurable, benefits of alcohol intoxication management services that could improve the validity of future evaluations.
Health Services and Delivery Research

ISSN 2050-4349 (Print)
ISSN 2050-4357 (Online)

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(www.publicationethics.org/).

Editorial contact: journals.library@nihr.ac.uk

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**This report**

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the HS&DR programme or one of its preceding programmes as project number 14/04/25. The contractual start date was in January 2016. The final report began editorial review in March 2019 and was accepted for publication in September 2019. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The HS&DR editors and production house have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors' report and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the final report document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this report.

This report presents independent research funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The views and opinions expressed by authors in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HS&DR programme or the Department of Health and Social Care. If there are verbatim quotations included in this publication the views and opinions expressed by the interviewees are those of the interviewees and do not necessarily reflect those of the authors, those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HS&DR programme or the Department of Health and Social Care.

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