

Young binge drinkers may not need special counseling from family docs

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Swiss study suggests results just as good for physicians without certain training.

(HealthDay)—Special counseling from family doctors had no effect on young people's binge drinking or marijuana use, new research suggests.

The study included 33 [family doctors](#) and pediatricians in Switzerland and nearly 600 [patients](#) aged 15 to 24. About half of the patients reported [binge drinking](#) (more than five drinks in one sitting) or marijuana use.

The doctors—most of whom had previous training in working with youth and alcohol-related issues—were divided into two groups. One group provided usual care while the other group was trained in counseling that had proven effective when dealing with [young people](#).

A year after seeing the doctors, the number of patients who reported excessive substance use had decreased by 28 percent. But there was no

significant difference between patients who received counseling and those who received usual care, the study found.

The findings were published March 6 in the *CMAJ* (*Canadian Medical Association Journal*).

"Training family doctors to deliver a brief intervention to address excessive substance use failed to reduce binge drinking and excessive cannabis use among young patients at three, six and 12 months follow-up," wrote researcher Dr. Dagmar Haller and colleagues in a journal news release. Haller is with the University of Geneva and Geneva University Hospitals, as well as the University of Melbourne, in Australia.

"Formal training in using the brief intervention may only have had a modest impact on the ability of experienced and interested family physicians to adapt their communication style with young people," the researchers suggested.

They said, however, that the findings do not indicate that family physicians have no role to play in reducing [substance abuse](#) in young patients. Further research is needed to determine effective approaches that can be used by family doctors, the study authors said.

More information: The U.S. National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism outlines what parents can do to [prevent their children from drinking](#).

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