

Program to help drunk drivers steer clear of reoffending

May 14 2015, by Sandra Hutchinson



Dr Hollie Wilson has developed an online program to reduce drink driving by targeting first time offenders.

An Australian-first QUT-developed online program to help first-time drink drivers steer clear of reoffending will be trialed in Brisbane and Cairns.

Dr Hollie Wilson, from QUT's Centre for Accident Research & Road Safety - Queensland (CARRS-Q), has developed the [Steering Clear First Offender Drink Driving Program](#), a brief intervention [program](#) aimed at reducing drink driving by targeting first-time offenders.

With the backing of QUT's innovation and knowledge transfer company, qutbluebox, Dr Wilson said a trial of the program would be rolled out to 100 first-time drink driving offenders starting in May.

"What we know is that while the majority of first-time offenders intend to avoid drink driving following their first court appearance, many will re-offend," Dr Wilson said.

"Every year in Queensland alone there are more than 25,000 drink driving offences recorded, so this remains a serious road safety problem warranting investigation."

Dr Wilson said the intervention program was developed in response to her PhD findings which revealed first-time drink drivers were at high risk of drink driving again in the future.

As part Dr Wilson's PhD study she surveyed more than 200 first-time convicted drink drivers, with the majority stating they did not intend to re-offend.

"In a follow up interview six months later with half of the offenders originally interviewed, 27 per cent admitted they had been over the limit behind the wheel," she said.

"The study found those who avoided drink driving had lower levels of alcohol and drug use and higher levels of future planning to avoid drink driving, than those who went on to drink drive again.

"When examining the traffic records a further six months later, of 137 originally in the study, only 7.3 per cent had recorded another drink driving conviction.

"This demonstrates that a large percentage of offenders re-offend in a

short time period without being caught."

Dr Wilson said the study highlighted the importance of taking a preventative approach with first-time convicted drink drivers to decrease the likelihood they would go on to offend again.

"Research has demonstrated that brief online interventions are effective in reducing risky health behaviours such as harmful alcohol use.

"This program is the first known research based online program that aims to reduce drink driving, making it a cost-effective intervention that could have widespread reach for first-time offenders."

She said the individually-tailored, theory based program was designed to make first-time offenders aware of the risks and consequences of a second drink driving offence, as well as address risky alcohol use and other factors that contribute to repeat offending.

"As a tailored intervention, it provides different levels of intervention to drink drivers based on their level of risk," she said.

"It allows participants to build personalised plans for the future and to prevent them from further drink driving convictions.

"It gives participants the information and skills they need to avoid drink driving, as well as providing access to a mobile friendly web app, that they can use after they have completed the program to track drinks and continue to build and update plans to avoid drink driving."

Dr Wilson said once tested, it was hoped the program could be tailored and rolled out across Australia and overseas.

The program is designed for people who have a first drink driving

offence with a blood alcohol content under 0.15.

More information: For more information on The Steering Clear First Offender Drink Driving Program, visit www.steeringclear.com.au

Provided by Queensland University of Technology

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