

Largest ever study of alcohol harm in emergency departments reveals huge toll

November 24 2015

One in 12 presentations to hospital emergency departments (EDs) are alcohol-related, according to latest research conducted by Monash University and the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (ACEM).

In the largest study of its kind ever undertaken, eight [emergency](#) departments across Australia and New Zealand were monitored over one week in December 2014.

The study found that one in 12 or 8.3 per cent of all presentations were alcohol-related.

"That equates to more than half a million alcohol-related patients attending EDs every year across Australia and New Zealand," said lead study author Adjunct Clinical Associate Professor Diana Egerton-Warburton at Monash University.

"Our study confirms that alcohol is having a huge impact on our emergency departments."

Over 9600 patients were screened as part of the study, which also found that alcohol-affected patients were more likely to require urgent resuscitation and arrive by ambulance and with police.

"One drunk person can disrupt an entire ED," said Professor Egerton-Warburton, who is also Chair of ACEM's Public Health Committee.

"They are often violent and aggressive, make staff feel unsafe and negatively impact on the care of other patients.

"The sheer volume of alcohol-affected patients means they disrupt EDs more than [patients](#) affected by ICE."

ACEM is calling on Australian and New Zealand governments to introduce firmer measures to limit the availability of alcohol.

"The measures included in the New South Wales 'Lockout' laws – particularly early closure – have demonstrated beyond doubt that when you reduce availability, you reduce harm," Associate Professor Warburton said.

"Other jurisdictions should follow NSW and now Queensland in introducing early closing times and reducing the availability of alcohol. Policy makers have the power to reduce the tide of human tragedy from alcohol harm."

Provided by Monash University

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