

Alcohol floor price linked to drop in hospital admissions for acute alcohol misuse

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Since the introduction of an alcohol floor price in the Northern Territory, presentations for acute alcohol misuse at Alice Springs Hospital's intensive care unit have dropped by 54 percent, according to

the authors of a research letter published today by the *Medical Journal of Australia*.

Since 1 October 2018 it has been illegal to sell [alcohol](#) for less than \$1.30 per standard drink.

Researchers led by Dr. Paul Secombe, an intensive care consultant at Alice Springs Hospital, analysed admission details for patients admitted to the hospital's ICU during the six months prior to the introduction of the floor price, and for the six months following.

In April of 2018, the local hospital code for alcohol [misuse](#) was refined to allow distinction between acute alcohol misuse (the patient presented intoxicated, had acute withdrawal symptoms during their inpatient admission, or had a diagnosis of alcoholic pancreatitis); and chronic misuse (end organ dysfunction attributable to alcohol—cardiomyopathy, [chronic pancreatitis](#), cirrhosis, acquired [brain injury](#) attributed to alcohol misuse—or more than four emergency department presentations during the preceding two years while intoxicated).

In the six months prior, "311 people (56 percent) were admitted and 246 (44 percent) during the six months after the introduction of the alcohol floor price. The proportion of presentations associated with acute alcohol misuse was 54 percent lower with the floor price (4.1 percent v 9.0 percent), but the decline in the proportion associated with chronic misuse was not statistically significant (9.8 percent v 13 percent)," Secombe and colleagues wrote.

"We found that the introduction of the alcohol floor price was followed by a significant reduction in the proportion of ICU admissions associated with acute [alcohol misuse](#) in Central Australia. We are investigating whether the proportion of patients presenting with chronic misuse also declines over time," they concluded.

More information: Paul J Secombe et al. The impact of an alcohol floor price on critical care admissions in Central Australia, *Medical Journal of Australia* (2019). [DOI: 10.5694/mja2.50404](https://doi.org/10.5694/mja2.50404)

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