

Getting the handle on hangovers

December 4 2020



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

How hangovers affect different people is not easy to predict according to a new Griffith University study.

"While many people have experienced a hangover, we actually don't know very much about how consistent these experiences are," says

senior researcher Associate Professor Ben Desbrow from the School of Allied Health Sciences.

"Ours is the first study to investigate whether the same hangover effects are experienced after a controlled dose of alcohol."

The study involved 21 participants (aged between 20 and 32), who completed two identical trials involving the consumption of eight to 10 standard drinks of their choice of either bourbon, whiskey or dark rum to elicit a hangover.

After staying overnight in the laboratory, participants rated the severity of their hangover before undertaking a series of cognitive function tests and applied tasks including simulated driving.

The researchers found that the "overall" rating of hangover was consistent with most participants rating it as mild to moderate. However, when assessed as individual hangover symptoms (e.g. nausea, malaise, headache etc), results varied.

"It is likely that individual hangover symptoms, such as tiredness, are affected by other factors outside the consumption of alcohol. So when a hangover symptom score is produced, it becomes unreliable," explains Nathan Delang, who completed his Bachelor of Nutrition and Dietetics Honors degree as part of the study team.

Performance on cognitive tasks (memory and problem-solving) was consistently poorer when experiencing a hangover. However, the impact of a hangover to impair simulated driving performance was smaller and less consistent.

"We also conducted a separate analysis on just those who reported identical hangover severity ratings to see if that strengthened the

reliability of our results on the cognitive tests. It did not, which suggests that predicting your level of impairment from just 'how you feel' has some limitations," Associate Professor Desbrow said.

"From this study, we have a much clearer picture that mild to moderate hangovers consistently impair cognitive function. We can now explore lifestyle factors that may moderate these effects such as sleep, diet and exercise."

"Consistency of [hangover](#) experience after a night of drinking: a controlled laboratory study" has been published in *Human Psychopharmacology: Clinical and Experimental*.

More information: Nathan Delang et al. Consistency of hangover experiences after a night of drinking: A controlled laboratory study, *Human Psychopharmacology: Clinical and Experimental* (2020). [DOI: 10.1002/hup.2771](#)

Provided by Griffith University

Citation: Getting the handle on hangovers (2020, December 4) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-12-hangovers.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--