

# **Study suggests interprofessional team training could prove effective in alcohol use disorder prevention and treatment**

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An LSU Health New Orleans study demonstrated the effectiveness of single, focused Interprofessional Education (IPE)-based exercises in preparing young health professions learners to limit or prevent alcohol use disorder (AUD). Students learned together as a foreshadowing of future interprofessional practice. This intervention produced significant decreases in the stigma associated with alcohol use, which is highly relevant for potential AUD patients. Results are published in *BMC Medical Education*.

"These results may translate into more effective and collaborative AUD treatment in future clinical settings, and this method of training may be effective for multiple [health conditions](#)," notes Scott Edwards, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Physiology and NIAAA and member of the Comprehensive Alcohol-HIV/AIDS Research Center at LSU Health New Orleans School of Medicine.

Previous research found that less than 10% of patients discuss [alcohol use](#) with their personal physician. Many [health](#) care providers are hesitant to ask patients about alcohol consumption due to the perception that screening may offend patients.

The researchers assessed the attitudes about alcohol of 459 students and their confidence in screening and AUD prevention. Students represented ten different health professions (audiology, cardiovascular sonography, dental hygiene, dentistry, medicine, nursing, physical therapy, [public health](#), respiratory therapy, and speech-language pathology programs).

For purposes of this exercise, students were divided into small, professionally diverse teams. Responses to ten survey questions were

collected via a web-based platform. These assessments were collected before and after a case-based exercise that provided information to students on the risks of excessive alcohol use as well as the effective screening and team-based management of individuals susceptible to AUD.

"The present study confirms and extends results from an assessment of an earlier AUD-related IPE exercise at our institution that revealed significant student improvements in identifying the Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test (AUDIT) as a useful screening tool, recognizing binge drinking patterns, and understanding the biomedical consequences of AUD," said Tina Gunaldo, Ph.D., DPT, Director for the Center for Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Practice at LSU Health New Orleans.

The exercise led to significant increases in self-reported knowledge and confidence in personal qualifications needed to initiate brief interventions to reduce alcohol use. Focused analyses of students from individual health programs uncovered unique improvements according to question theme and health profession.

"Our AUD-based training exercise both informed early learners about the potential risks of alcohol use as well as provided guidelines and resources for the screening and treatment of AUD," adds Dr. Edwards. "Our work also discovered substantial improvements in student knowledge, confidence, and other personal qualities necessary for brief interventions aimed at limiting problematic alcohol use."

The authors write, "A recent qualitative analysis of barriers for screening practices interviewed a host of key interprofessional stakeholders (including patients, primary care providers, nurses, and medical assistants), and their findings emphasized a lack of training as a barrier, as well as the need for more universal screening practices."

"Patients voiced concerns over the consequences of disclosing substance use, but despite this risk of stigma, they also expressed that the primary care provider should play a central role in substance use screening and interventions. Indeed, patients generally support alcohol screening by their [health care providers](#), and patients who are screened and counseled report having received higher-quality primary care overall."

According to the NIAAA, "Alcohol use disorder (AUD) is a [medical condition](#) characterized by an impaired ability to stop or control alcohol use despite adverse social, occupational, or health consequences. It encompasses the conditions that some people refer to as alcohol abuse, alcohol dependence, [alcohol](#) addiction, and the colloquial term, alcoholism. Considered a brain disorder, AUD can be mild, moderate, or severe."

The 2021 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) by SAMHSA's Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality reported that 29.5 million people ages 12 and older (10.6% in this age group) had AUD in the past year.

**More information:** Scott Edwards et al, Interprofessional education as a potential foundation for future team-based prevention of alcohol use disorder, *BMC Medical Education* (2023). [DOI: 10.1186/s12909-023-04100-y](#)

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