

COVID-19 implications for alcohol and other drug use, problems and services, and alcohol-related harm in the home and workplace

Editorial

In this first issue of IJADR of 2024 we have seen a number of papers that continue to explore the implications of COVID-19 for alcohol and other drug use, problems and services (Willoughby et al., 2024; Wijesundara et al, 2024). Researchers in our field continue to ask questions about how business and service systems respond, adjust and cope. Lessons from how business and treatment systems respond to unexpected threats are useful for future service development and better disaster proofing, particularly as we head into situations where we will experience global warming, food instability, resource shortages, pandemics and extreme weather events more often. While service systems seek to respond to arising problems, industries also respond to business opportunities they identify in changing markets (Willoughby et al., 2024).

The first paper on the COVID theme (Willoughby et al., 2024) reports on a study that examined the use of alcohol home delivery services and alcohol consumption among adults in New South Wales, Australia during various periods throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. A longitudinal study design was used which allowed the researchers to track alcohol consumption (number of standard drinks consumed during a typical week) and use of alcohol beverage home delivery services during different COVID lockdown periods in Australia. The study involved four waves of data collection. Use of home delivery services increased during COVID, although there were no gender differences observed in home delivery service use in this study. However, older participants were more likely to report home delivery use than younger participants. Furthermore, levels of alcohol consumption (average drinks per day) increased with home delivery use.

In a global review of alcohol and other drug service responses during the COVID-19 pandemic, Wijesundara and colleagues (2024) illustrated that services were disrupted and impacted, but recovered relatively quickly, with there being evidence of innovation with, for example, greater utilisation of on-line treatment. In their paper Wijesundara and colleagues (2024) highlighted systems where emergency referral and care pathways for targeted populations were developed and that it was crucial that such pathways be maintained during crises. Collaboration with stakeholders was important for identifying alternative

solutions: enhanced combination of telehealth and face-to-face service delivery modalities emerged and were seen to be effective. Instances where pharmacological treatment was administered with improved flexibility despite during infectious outbreaks were commended.

The next two papers (Tanyos et al., 2024; Afolabi, 2024) study the effects of alcohol in the home and the workplace. Tanyos and colleagues examined alcohol-related intimate partner violence experiences pre-COVID in Australia using data from the 2019 National Drug Strategy Household Survey. As expected, women were more likely than men to report experiencing past twelve-month alcohol-related intimate partner violence. Just under 5% reported experiencing any kind of alcohol-related intimate partner violence. The main predictors of experiencing any form of alcohol-related intimate partner violence were demographic factors (age, marital status and household composition) and heavy episodic drinking (HED) for women. For men the main predictors were age, education status and HED. This study provides insights into potential targets for alcohol-related intimate partner violence prevention interventions.

While the other papers in this issue were based in Australia, Afolabi's paper (2024) sheds light on drinking alcohol and work practices in informal workplaces in a low- and middle-income setting. Interviewing informal automobile artisans in Nigeria about alcohol consumption and its contribution to workplace health problems, Afolabi (2024) reported on very heavy drinking among these workers and found a range of workplace injuries and illnesses, with accidents and injuries exacerbated by alcohol. Cultural attitudes about the positive effects of alcohol on workplace functioning were identified and questioned, with workplaces identified as a place for intervention.

This year we have been working hard on the regular issues (including the inaugural KBS issue) and the two-part special issue, *Alcohol Prevention Research and Policy Development in Lower- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs): Facilitating Partnerships, Capacity and Impact*, guest edited by Monica Swahn, and several other guest editors. The *KBS 2023 Annual Symposium Issue* led by Rachel O'Donnell will be the first of IJADR's KBS Issues and will become a regular, ongoing and integral feature of IJADR. We are

delighted to be co-releasing these special and regular issues over the next two months. If you are attending KBS Fremantle, please consider publishing your articles in our *KBS 2024 Annual Symposium Issue* next year and reach out to Rachel, Neo or Anne-Marie. We of course continue to welcome submissions to our regular issues.

We very much look forward to meeting in Fremantle, Western Australia for the 49th Annual Alcohol Epidemiology Symposium of the Kettil Bruun Society (KBS).

Anne-Marie Laslett, PhD, MPH, MDSc, BDS

Co-Editor-in-Chief

Associate Professor and National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Emerging Leader and Principal Research Fellow,

Centre for Alcohol Policy Research, La Trobe University, Australia

Associate Director (Graduate Studies), Care Economy Research Institute, La Trobe University, Australia

Board Member, International Society of Addiction Journal Editors

Neo K. Morojele, PhD

Co-Editor-in-Chief

Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Johannesburg, South Africa

Honorary Professor, School of Public Health and Family Medicine, University of Cape Town, South Africa

Vice-President, International Society of Addiction Journal Editors

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