



Alcohol, Other Drugs, and Gambling Research project opportunities

The Northern Territory (NT) has the highest level of alcohol consumption per capita in Australia, with notably high-risk drinking patterns. The harmful use of alcohol has significant health and social impacts as outlined in a recent independent review of NT Alcohol Policies and Legislation. It is often associated with domestic and family violence, mental health concerns, crime, illicit drug use, engagement in the justice system and/or incarceration.

The Alcohol, Other Drugs and Gambling (AODG) research program sits within the Wellbeing and Preventable Chronic Diseases Division of Menzies. Menzies has shown a longstanding commitment to leading and conducting high-quality, culturally-responsive, policy-relevant and contextually-nuanced alcohol and other drugs research and evaluation projects, at both local and national levels. This has been recognised through the 2021 Excellence in Harm Reduction Award presented by the Association for Alcohol and Other Drugs Agencies NT; and the 2019 National Alcohol and Other Drugs Excellence and Innovation Award (Research) presented by the Alcohol and Drug Foundation. The AODG research program has three distinct streams relating to alcohol and other drug harm minimisation; social and emotional wellbeing; and gambling.



Understanding psycho-social factors influencing physical activity behaviour among Australian adolescents

WELLBEING AND PREVENTABLE CHRONIC DISEASES

MASTER BY RESEARCH

PhD

In modern society, the level of sedentary behaviour is expanding and related to poorer health outcomes such as overweight and obesity, cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes and other adverse health outcomes. In contrast, the health benefit and preventive role of regular physical activity in chronic diseases and psychological health have been observed in numerous studies. The literature also demonstrates a relationship between psycho-social factors and physical activity in improving health outcomes. Thus, understanding these aspects of physical activity constitutes a high priority in health and sport science research. Adolescents are considered priority population groups in such research because physical activity behaviour is connected to early childhood models, and puberty are transitional life periods presenting various challenges. Behavioural science approaches include methods and ideas of different disciplines such as psychology, sociology, communication and medicine to support a deeper understanding of physical activity behaviour.

This project aims to understand the influence of sociological and psychological factors on physical activity behaviour among adolescents in Australia. The potential variable of interest will include social influences, social support, life goals, life satisfaction, competitiveness, value orientation, motivation, psychosocial health, and social attitudes.

The project will use a longitudinal study design and follow-up participants to identify the changes in their behaviour over time and established temporal associations between the variables of interest. The student will also have the opportunity to further develop ideas and concepts associated with behavioural health science, as it relates to physical activity. Depending on interest, the student will also have an opportunity to conduct secondary data analysis of existing datasets or carry out cross-cultural comparisons. Study results will inform targeted health promotion programs and practices aiming to increase physical activity level and evolve a long-term positive attitude of a physically active lifestyle among adolescents in Australia.

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Social media and risky alcohol use among young male Australian university students

WELLBEING AND PREVENTABLE CHRONIC DISEASES

MASTER BY RESEARCH

PhD

Despite population declines in alcohol use, young people still drink at levels that put them at risk of alcohol-related harm, with males drinking more than females. There is genuine cause for concern regarding alcohol and youth as the age at which most people transition from high school to university coincides with the age of those most likely to drink at risky levels and thus are more vulnerable to alcohol-related harm. Gender norms shape the drinking behaviours of Australian youth, with young males having higher rates of risky health practices (e.g., harmful use of alcohol) and also a reluctance to engage in preventive health behaviours.

The alcohol industry utilises social media (SM) for alcohol promotion, with youth being the target audience. There exists a relationship between exposure to SM alcohol-related content and drinking, especially among young males. Most of the related international and scant Australian work has been limited by being only observational and with cross-sectional data. Thus, this study would be the first to explore baseline prevalence and predictors of engagement with SM alcohol marketing and its relationship with alcohol use, and the emergence of these relationships over time (i.e., over the first year of university), among the target group.

The overall aim of this mixed-methods (an online survey and co-design workshops) project is to generate new knowledge about how the relationship between exposure to and engagement with SM alcohol marketing, and alcohol use compounds over time, in an effort to minimise harm from alcohol use among young male university students in Australia.

Dr Himanshu Gupta

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Investigating the influence of marketing on sports betting among young men living in Australia

WELLBEING AND PREVENTABLE CHRONIC DISEASES

MASTER BY RESEARCH

PhD

There has been a significant increase in the amount of marketing for sports betting products in Australia, including significant increases in advertising spend by online bookmakers. Marketing strategies for sports betting extend beyond traditional marketing platforms and include more contemporary forms such as social media platforms and commercial sports sponsorship.

Young men appear to be the target market for sports betting companies, with a range of marketing and promotional strategies used to both appeal to and reach this audience. Limited research indicates that gambling advertising increases the likelihood of gambling, may increase already high levels of gambling, and is likely to make it more difficult for problem gamblers to gamble less or not gamble at all.

Sport betting advertisers seek to build and develop upon existing cultural symbols, behaviours, and contexts, with an aim of embedding their product within these behaviours and creating new sub-cultures and identities associated with that product. Gambling industry through its marketing, associates sports betting with the culturally-valued aspects of being a sports fan - including masculinity, mateship, support for your team, fan loyalty, thrill, winning, and power. These marketing tactics, which are so closely aligned with such a valued cultural activity in sports, may have an influential impact on individual and peer group identities associated with gambling on sports.

There exists limited Australian research that has explored how marketing strategies influence gambling attitudes and consumption intentions, and the range of strategies that are used to reduce the risks posed by marketing to different population sub-groups. The overall aim of this qualitative study is to understand how marketing impacts gambling behaviours of young Australian male sports bettors in order to develop strategies that will minimise systemic gambling into the future.

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Understanding the impact of the Banned Drinker Register and other alcohol policies in the Northern Territory

WELLBEING AND PREVENTABLE CHRONIC DISEASES

MASTER BY RESEARCH

PhD

This project is part of a comprehensive evaluation of the impacts of alcohol policies in the NT (Learning from Alcohol policy Reforms in the NT [LEARNT]). LEARNT provides important information for policy makers, treatment agencies and key stakeholders within the NT, nationally and internationally. One of the key focuses of the LEARNT project is evaluating the impact of the Banned Drinker Register (BDR) which involves placing identified problem drinkers onto a register which prohibits the consumption, possession or purchase of alcohol for a period of at least three months. A key part of the BDR is the use of identification (ID) scanners linked to the Register at all alcohol takeaway outlets, with a statutory form of ID scanned for every customer. This intervention is unique in its focus on individualised control of problems around packaged liquor.

LEARNT is a multicomponent mixed-methods study, involving analyses of epidemiological and linked data (police, emergency departments, child protection, hospital admissions, AOD treatment, school attendance), as well as qualitative data from key stakeholders and people who have been placed on the BDR, and their families and communities to understand how people perceive the BDR to have impacted on their attitudes and behaviours including substance use; their experiences of the health and justice system; social cohesion and family/kinship relationships; access to alcohol and drug treatment. We are also interested in whether there are unintended consequences of the BDR for individuals, their family members or the broader community.

The student's project could focus on alcohol availability and harmful outcomes; alcohol use outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; the cumulative impact of alcohol policies on high-risk drinkers and their families or a different topic relevant to the study's aims, negotiated with the study investigators and supervisors.

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Eligibility Criteria and Scholarship Provisions

Eligibility: The successful applicant will meet the eligibility criteria for admission to a Master by Research or Doctor of Philosophy degree at Charles Darwin University.

Scholarship Provisions:

Candidates will be encouraged to seek Research Training Program (RTP) scholarship funding through Charles Darwin University. Further information about RTP scholarship application process, eligibility criteria and key dates can be found on this [CDU webpage](#)

A successful candidate who is a recipient of a primary scholarship such as RTP will be eligible to apply for a Menzies top-up scholarship to the value of \$10,000 per annum for up to 3.5 years. Successful candidates will receive \$3,500 per annum for up to 3.5 years to cover direct costs of the research.

Application Process

Applicants should submit the following:

- Brief summary of why they want to complete the project
- Current CV
- Copies of certified academic transcripts
- Proof of Residency (not required for Australian citizens)

Applications close on 30th September 2021.

For more information please contact Prof James Smith james.smith@menzies.edu.au