

The long-term effect of lockouts on alcohol-related emergency department attendances within Ballarat, Australia

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Abstract

Introduction and Aims: Alcohol has consistently been demonstrated to increase levels of aggression and violence, particularly in late night licensed venues. Since August 2003, Ballarat (a regional city of approximately 95 000 inhabitants, in Victoria, Australia) has implemented a 3:00 AM lockout with the goal of reducing alcohol related harms. This paper is the first long term analysis of the effect of this type of intervention on emergency department (ED) attendances. The aim of this paper is to examine the effectiveness of a lockout intervention within the city of Ballarat, Victoria on alcohol related ED presentations. Design and Methods: This paper examines alcohol related injury frequencies pre to post lockout intervention in Ballarat, Victoria, from 1999 to 2009, as indicated by ED International Classification of Diseases codes for acute alcohol intoxication and assault. These data are further compared with similar data from Geelong, Victoria, as a control. Results: A small reduction in alcohol related assaults and intoxication rates within Ballarat occurred

before and after the introduction of the lockout. However, after this decline these rates steadily increased, surpassing Geelong by 2005. Discussion and Conclusions: There is no discernible long term impact on alcohol related ED attendances of the lockout intervention in Ballarat. As such, other interventions may be more appropriate to reduce alcohol related ED attendances.

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