

## NEW RESEARCH VALIDATES ONLINE COMMUNITY SUCCESS IN REDUCING HIGH RISK DRINKING

While Instagram, Facebook and other social media platforms are often saturated with images of alcohol use (and abuse), an online forum has emerged as an unlikely ally in the fight against high risk drinking. With alcohol misuse costing Australians over \$30 billion a year, a [new study published](#) in JMIR (*Journal of Medical Internet Research*) has revealed a simple, effective and affordable solution to treating individuals with hazardous and harmful levels of alcohol consumption.

According to research conducted by [Hello Sunday Morning](#) - the largest online movement for alcohol behaviour change in the world – web-based support is an effective tool in aiding high risk drinkers seeking to manage their consumption. The outcomes were measured using the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT) scores.

In fact, the data collated from the 1,917 participants (63.7% female, 36.3% male) who signed up to the online blog for a 3-month study discussing their experience with alcohol abstinence revealed the following **key findings**:

- Individuals who reported hazardous and harmful consumption levels who engaged in the Hello Sunday Morning program reported a significant decrease in alcohol consumption, moving to lower risk consumption levels four months following program commencement.
- Those who reported high-risk or dependent consumption levels, experienced the biggest reduction in alcohol use, four months following program commencement.
- These reductions in risk were maintained by participants in each group, seven months following program commencement. Furthermore, those who engaged in the program more (as defined by more sign-in's, blogs posted, check-ins completed, engagement with the community through likes and following), had lower alcohol consumption.

In the face of an increasingly digitalised world, the conclusions of the study validate the effectiveness of some online support networks in encouraging positive behavioural change among individuals.

Hello Sunday Morning CEO Chris Raine says the findings validate the benefits of an online community in supporting behavior change.

“We know that of the 400,000 Australians who seek treatment for alcohol problems, 70% won't get the help they need because existing treatment services are at peak pressure and expensive. If we can tip the scales to offer the most basic support early on – such as through Hello Sunday Morning, which is also free – we can dramatically improve the way Australians consume alcohol.”

\*Complete study findings can be viewed at: <http://www.jmir.org/2018/5/e196/>

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