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Daybreak app more than halves alcohol use in three months: new research

Use of the *Daybreak* digital app, developed as an intervention to support high-risk drinking individuals looking to change their relationship with alcohol, can lead to clinically significant reductions in alcohol use, according to new research.

The study, peer-reviewed and published in the *Journal of Medical Internet Research* today, found that, use of the *Daybreak* app can support the treatment of both “risky/harmful” and “probably dependent” drinkers, who are often the most complex cases to treat.

The research evaluated the effectiveness of the *Daybreak* program after three months of use. The evaluation was conducted by researchers at the National Drug Research Institute (NDRI) at Curtin University, and involved 793 Australian adults. It was found that:

- The 70 per cent of study participants classed as “probably dependent” more than halved their alcohol consumption while using *Daybreak*, from 40.8 standard drinks a week to 20.1 standard drinks.
- Alcohol consumption among “risky/harmful” drinkers dropped from 22.9 standard drinks a week to 11.9 standard drinks, which is below National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines that recommend no more than 14 drinks a week.

The *Daybreak* app, developed by Hello Sunday Morning, provides access to a supportive online community, interventions, and ‘coaching’ to help people reduce harms from drinking. The app has considerable reach, with more than 50,000 people having used the program since 2016. It is accessible to anyone with a smartphone and available whenever someone wishes to seek help, often within the comfort of their own home.

NDRI Senior Research Fellow, Dr Robert Tait, who led the evaluation, said that those who stayed engaged with the *Daybreak* program showed remarkable reductions in their alcohol consumption.

“An important finding was that the *Daybreak* program also benefited those who are “probably dependent” on alcohol,” said Dr Tait.

“This is significant because until now it has generally been considered too hard to treat this group of people online or with just a brief face-to-face intervention, and they are usually referred for more intensive treatment.

“While our evaluation only focused on a small group of people over three months, the reductions in alcohol consumption achieved indicate the potential for online interventions to help people with more entrenched alcohol problems, which is particularly significant given the wide potential reach of online interventions.”

Hello Sunday Morning CEO Chris Raine said that for some people seeking help, *Daybreak* may provide sufficient support for them to successfully change their relationship with alcohol, and the app could also provide valuable additional support for people who require more traditional interventions.

“I hope that these findings will be an important contribution to establishing best practice in supporting high-risk and probably dependent drinkers,” he said.

“Most importantly, the 400,000 people in Australia who say they want help to reduce their use of alcohol can instantly receive support that is proven to be effective, in the privacy and convenience of their own homes, by downloading the *Daybreak* app.”

This research was funded through a grant from nib foundation.

The full report is available at: <http://www.jmir.org/2019/8/e14967/>

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NOTES TO EDITORS**About Daybreak**

Around 400,000 Australians need access to treatment for alcohol problems, and of those who do get seen, 70 per cent won't get sufficient help because existing treatment services are unscalable and expensive. *Daybreak* is an online program that helps people change their relationship with alcohol through a supportive community, habit-change experiments, and one-on-one chats with health coaches. Not only can this provide valuable and anonymous support for individuals in need, it is also able to reduce the burden on the hospital system. Since 2016, *Daybreak* has been available across the PHN network, and since 2018 it has been funded by the Federal Government with an initial \$3m investment. More than 5,000 clients remain active in the program each month.

About Hello Sunday Morning

Hello Sunday Morning is an organisation based in Sydney, Australia. Its mission is to help people to change their relationship with alcohol, and to provide them with the tools for doing that.

Hello Sunday Morning was born in 2009 when CEO, Chris Raine, undertook a year-long experiment to quit drinking. A nightclub promoter at the time, Chris blogged about the challenges and successes of this experiment when he woke up hangover-free every Sunday Morning, signing off with, "Hello, Sunday morning!" First extending the challenge to his flatmate, by 2014 Hello Sunday Morning had grown into the world's largest online community of people supporting each other to change their behaviour around alcohol.

This community has now merged into our key offering – a program called *Daybreak*. The *Daybreak* program is helping people to change their drinking habits one day at a time. *Daybreak* is a digital service that people can access through either an app or the web. It provides an anonymous and supportive environment for consumers to set alcohol change goals and to then work with health professionals to achieve them.

About the National Drug Research Institute

The National Drug Research Institute (NDRI) is one of the largest centres of alcohol and other drug research expertise in Australia. NDRI is based at Curtin University in Perth, Western Australia.

NDRI is supported by core funding from the Australian Government under the Drug and Alcohol Program and also receives significant funding from Curtin University. Additional competitive funds are attracted from a range of state, national and international funding bodies, such as the National Health and Medical Research Council and the Australian Research Council. NDRI is a World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre for the Prevention of Alcohol and Drug Abuse.