



e-newsletter

The latest in DHBRF news and information

Issue 23

November 2008

## Research Theme

Minimising Harm Caused by Alcohol and Illicit and Other Drug Use to Both Individuals and the Community

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## 1. Introduction

A key concern for New Zealand is the harm caused by alcohol and other drugs. This encompasses physical harm to users, as well as direct and indirect harm to families and communities. A tragic example is the Ministry of Transport Motor Vehicle Crashes 2007 statistic that driver alcohol/drugs was a contributing factor in 31.1% of fatal crashes.



The topic of this issue of the DHBRF e-news was developed following a report that the initiation of the confronting and controversial advertisements about people with alcohol problems had coincided with a big rise in the number of first-time callers to the national Alcohol Drug Helpline. More can be read below about this successful campaign. The Alcohol Advisory Council (ALAC) have also contributed a fantastic breakdown of research projects they are involved in covering a broad range of topics, and highlighting some future conferences on the theme.

Also in this issue there are contributions from two leading New Zealand researchers in the field. Dr Bruce Russell, from the School of Pharmacy at the University of Auckland is one of few international researchers investigating the effects of the constituents of party pills, some of which were until recently available legally in New Zealand despite little evidence for their safety. Professor Sally Casswell is the Director of the SHORE research centre at Massey University, and is highly regarded in the field of alcohol and drug policy development. We put a brief set of questions to Sally regarding alcohol and drug use in New Zealand.

Finally, a list of peer-reviewed publications on alcohol and drug research by HRC funded researchers is available to download.

Next month's DHBRF e-news will be the final issue for 2008 and will be on the theme Knowledge is Power. This will include an exciting summary of the DHBRF projects funded to date. Please email [ahaggie@hrc.govt.nz](mailto:ahaggie@hrc.govt.nz) if you have any ideas for including in this newsletter, or any questions you would like answered in this issue.

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## 2. Increasing Importance for Recreational Drug Research due to Growing Societal Acceptance and Use: Dr Bruce Russell

Dr Bruce Russell is a research pharmacist and senior lecturer at the University of Auckland's School of Pharmacy. Bruce's research interests revolve mainly around the acute and long term effects of recreational drug use on brain function and their metabolism. In the past Bruce has worked as a Clinical Pharmacist and maintains an active interest in Treatment Resistant Schizophrenia and acute psychotic episodes. A recent research focus has involved investigating the effects of the active constituents of "Party Pills".



In this issue of the DHBRF enews Bruce Russell points out a paradox of recreational drugs – where everyone has an opinion which is often based on personal experiences or biased information, but rarely on hard science. The recent furor surrounding BZP and other constituents of party pills is a prime example where many decisions were made based on limited clinical information. Following reclassification of BZP to a Class C1 drug this process is about to be repeated because the Party Pill Industry has replaced BZP with yet another psychoactive compound which exists outside the current legislation. Critics suggest that the Party Pill industry should demonstrate the safety of their new compounds before marketing. However, NZ is not the only country that has experienced inherent difficulties in adopting this approach.

Download Bruce Russell's full article [here](#).

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### 3. An Interview with Professor Sally Casswell

Professor Sally Casswell is a social scientist and is the Director of the Centre for Social and Health Outcomes Research and Evaluation (SHORE) at Massey University. Her research interests are in social and public health policy, particularly in relation to alcohol and other drugs. She has a particular interest in development and implementation of healthy public policy at the community level and in evaluation of these initiatives, including strategies to reduce the exposure of young people to alcohol marketing.

We asked Sally a few questions about the enews topic of minimising harm caused by alcohol and other drugs. She makes a key point that the contribution that alcohol makes to the global burden of disease is comparable in public health importance to that of tobacco. However, the public policy response lags behind.

Download [here](#) the full interview with Sally Casswell.



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### 4. More People Seeking Help for Alcohol Addiction

The impact of this year's hard-hitting television and radio advertisements for people with alcohol problems has undoubtedly contributed to the big rise in the number of first-time callers to the national Alcohol Drug Helpline, according to CEO, Cate Kearney.



Of the total of 16,000 calls received at the Helpline in the past year, 12,000 (75%) were from first-time callers, statistics from the [Alcohol Drug Association of New Zealand](#)'s (ADANZ) annual report show. 71% of calls were alcohol-related, and this was consistent throughout New Zealand. Helpline statistics for the past 12 months show that cannabis retains its place as the most frequently called about other drug.

The total number of calls represents a 5% increase on the previous year's calls, with the biggest rise in caller numbers occurring between April and June this year – immediately after the ALAC television advertising campaign began.

ADANZ manages the national Alcohol Drug Helpline (0800 787 797). The Helpline is an information, referral and intervention service, offering confidential assistance and support for drinking and drug-taking. ADANZ also provides coordination services including networking forums, newsletters and other information, and advocacy around health and treatment public policy. ADANZ also manages the [Addictions Treatment Directory](#) - an online database of all the alcohol and drug treatment agencies available in every region of New Zealand.

Download the full article [here](#).

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## 5. ALAC Research Programme Profiled

The Strategic Direction 2008-2013 of the Alcohol Advisory Council (ALAC) affirms that as part of its mission of leading change in New Zealand's drinking culture so that whānau and communities enjoy life free from alcohol harms, it is committed to undertaking research specific to New Zealand, especially our priority populations. This ensures ALAC's programmes and advice is based on evidence. In a comprehensive segment available for download, ALAC have highlighted a number of projects of particular relevance to DHBs. Links are included to reports and websites of interest, and several conferences of interest are identified.

These projects cover a broad spectrum of research from a study of the role of alcohol in unintended injuries at home, to an alcohol screening and brief intervention protocol in a hospital setting, to the development of a screening and outcome measurement instrument for young people and alcohol-related hospital admissions research.



Download the ALAC Research Programme Summary [here](#).

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## 6. Recent Publications by New Zealand Researchers

New Zealand has an excellent track record in producing research results for presentation in international journals. Some recent research publications from HRC funded researchers on alcohol and other drugs, which may be relevant to DHB core business have been highlighted for download [here](#).

A list of current HRC funded projects on this theme can be downloaded [here](#).

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## 7. Useful Links

The [National Drug Policy](#) and National Mental Health Strategy form the alcohol and drug policy framework. Key documents under these include the [National Alcohol Strategy](#) and [Strategic Framework for Alcohol and Drug Services](#).

The [National Drug Policy](#) website contains helpful information and resources regarding several specific abused recreational drugs.

[Action Plan on Alcohol and Illicit Drugs](#)

[Alcohol Advisory Council of New Zealand](#) (ALAC)

[Alcohol Drug Association of New Zealand](#) (ADANZ)

[Addictions Treatment Directory](#)

[Centre for Social and Health Outcomes Research and Evaluation at Massey University](#) (SHORE)

[Alcohol and Public Health Research Unit](#) (APHRU)

[Cannabis and Your Health: Ministry of Health Pamphlet](#)

[New Zealand Drug Foundation](#)

[Sorted safer partying drug information guide](#)

[Community Alcohol and Drug Services](#)

[Urge/Whakamanawa](#) Youth Website

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#### 8. Next DHBRF e-newsletter:

The next issue of the DHBRF e-newsletter will be on the theme *Knowledge is Power*, featuring profiles of the DHBRF funded research projects, highlighting the areas of focus and proposed translatability of research outcomes.

If you have a proposed newsletter item please email [ahaggie@hrc.govt.nz](mailto:ahaggie@hrc.govt.nz)

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#### 9 . About the purpose of the DHBRF e-newsletter:

- Provide DHBs with information relevant to DHB core business i.e. funding and planning activities
- Identify research that could inform planning for public health services
- Identify less relevant research which may have more of a biomedical focus
- Monthly communications focus on one of the priority population health goals as outlined in the New Zealand Health Strategy
- Information is taken from an annual HRC report identifying publications produced by New Zealand research teams or funded by the HRC between May 2005 – June 2006

Information included represents highlights of findings of high-quality research, readily available at the time of writing

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#### 10 . [Subscribe/unsubscribe](#)

To subscribe or unsubscribe, send an e-mail containing your title, name, job title, organisation, mailing address, phone and fax number, with the subject line "Subscribe DHB eNewsletter" or "Unsubscribe DHB eNewsletter" to [jlawson@hrc.govt.nz](mailto:jlawson@hrc.govt.nz).

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#### 11 . [Contact Us:](#)

To contact us telephone Aroha Haggie at the HRC on (09) 303 5207 or email: [ahaggie@hrc.govt.nz](mailto:ahaggie@hrc.govt.nz)

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Check out the HRC's website on [www.hrc.govt.nz](http://www.hrc.govt.nz)