Can a web-based intervention moderate alcohol use?
Investigating the alcohol related behaviour of Sixth Form students

Bewick, B.M., Mulhern, B, and Hill, A.J.
SSA November 2009
Baseline survey

- 20 schools, n=870 students
- 50% female
- 82% White/White British
  9% Asian/Asian British
- 68% Year 12
- Mean age 16.6 years
Majority of students reported having their first drink in their early teens

Figure 2: Age of first whole alcoholic drink
Table 2: Students’ reported frequency of drinking alcohol

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male n=340</th>
<th>Female n=501</th>
<th>Total n=841*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n (%)</td>
<td>n (%)</td>
<td>n (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never consumed alcohol</td>
<td>43 (13)</td>
<td>51 (10)</td>
<td>94 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No longer consume alcohol</td>
<td>10 (3)</td>
<td>18 (4)</td>
<td>28 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a month or less</td>
<td>87 (26)</td>
<td>158 (32)</td>
<td>245 (29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About once a fortnight</td>
<td>51 (15)</td>
<td>108 (22)</td>
<td>159 (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once or twice a week</td>
<td>144 (42)</td>
<td>159 (32)</td>
<td>303 (36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily or almost daily</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>7 (1)</td>
<td>12 (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* only includes those participants who gave their gender

14%
37%
Figure 4: Level of alcohol consumption over the last week
Figure 5: Reported frequency of feeling drunk during the last year for those students who are current consumers of alcohol
Figure 7: Number of adult binge drinking episodes (i.e. 6 or more units for females/ 8 or more units for males) reported in the last week
Figure 9: Reported lifetime experience of alcohol related consequences for students who currently drink alcohol.
Drinking at hazardous/harmful weekly levels?

- Four times as likely to:
  - Had a fight
  - Skipped school

- Three times as likely to:
  - Driven over the limit
  - Been hospitalised because of their drinking
  - Been in trouble with the police
  - Had sex when ordinarily wouldn’t

- Twice as likely to:
  - Have had unprotected sex
Could a web-based approach work?
Unitcheck: Personalised feedback

- **Alcohol consumption**
  - Units consumed per week
  - Number of alcohol free days
  - Binge drinking behaviour

- **Social norms**
  - The percentage of students who drink less than them
  - Perceived negative effects of alcohol perceived by other students who consume a similar amount of alcohol.

- **Information on support services**
Do you know how much other students drink?

- See how many units are in the alcohol you drink.
- Check if the amount you're drinking is risky for your health.
- See how many other university students drink a similar amount to you.

Enter the email address you provided when you recently completed the Unitcheck student alcohol consumption questionnaire.

Enter your email address or register.

What if I don't drink?

We know that not all students drink alcohol. Students who don't drink form an important part of the student body. This site also provides information to students who don't drink so even if you don't consume alcohol please log on.

How safe is my information?

All information you provide is stored safely and securely. The questions do not take long to complete.

Unitcheck: Trial 1 University of Leeds

Bewick et al. (2008) Addictive Behaviors 33:1192-1198
Unitcheck: Trial 2 University of Leeds

Control (n=608) vs Intervention (n=531)

Units consumed average occasion

- Pre-Intervention
- Post-Intervention
- Follow up

* denotes significant difference
Could a social norms approach work with Sixth Form students?
1 in 3 believe most students get drunk at least once a week

24% of students actually reported getting drunk at least weekly

Figure 15: Percentage of students who believe that ‘most’ or ‘all’ of their friends consume alcohol.
13 schools, n=810 students

Intervention
7 schools
n=407

visited website
n=114

post-assessment
n=59

14%

Control
6 schools
n=403

post-assessment
n=84

21%
Table 5: Proportion of students using Unitcheck who score within each of the AUDIT categories
category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUDIT score</th>
<th>Definition and advice</th>
<th>n (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 or non-drinker</td>
<td></td>
<td>50 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-7</td>
<td>Normal range (adults)</td>
<td>54 (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-15</td>
<td>Medium range of alcohol problems: Simple advice focused on the reduction of hazardous drinking</td>
<td>35 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-19</td>
<td>High level of alcohol problems: Brief counselling and continued monitoring</td>
<td>5 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20+</td>
<td>High level of alcohol problems: Further diagnostic evaluation for alcohol problems</td>
<td>8 (5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

31%
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n=403</td>
<td>n=407</td>
<td>n=810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Units consumed</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial survey</td>
<td>10.28 (17.71)</td>
<td>12.17 (23.94)</td>
<td>11.23 (21.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-intervention</td>
<td>10.04 (17.51)</td>
<td>10.61 (21.33)</td>
<td>10.32 (19.51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Units consumed per occasion</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial survey</td>
<td>4.90 (6.90)</td>
<td>5.97 (9.06)</td>
<td>5.44 (8.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-intervention</td>
<td>4.79 (6.71)</td>
<td>5.16 (8.40)</td>
<td>4.97 (7.61)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

p<0.01
No sig diff

sig diff

p=0.03
No sig effect of condition
Conclusions

- Students’ overestimation of the peer’s level of drinking offers one avenue to modify consumption.

- Web-based interventions may be effective in modifying behaviour of Sixth Form students.

- Further research is required to increase intervention engagement and counter the high attrition rate observed.
unitcheck

What does Unitcheck do?
See how many units are in the alcohol you drink.
Check if the amount you're drinking is risky for your health.
See how many people drink a similar amount to you.

Email address: [input field]
Password: [input field]

What if I don't drink?
We know that not all people drink alcohol. This site also provides information to those who don't drink so even if you don't consume alcohol please log on.

How safe is my information?
All information you provide is stored safely and securely. The questions do not take long to complete. The questionnaire is anonymous and confidentiality is assured.
Thanks for listening