The feasibility and effectiveness of a web-based alcohol intervention in UK university students

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Background: National context

- The Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy for England (2004) has a focus on tackling the harm caused by alcohol consumption among young people.

- It is a minority of 18-24 year old binge drinkers who are responsible for the majority of alcohol-related crime and disorder (Safe. Sensible. Social, 2007).

- The UK Royal College of Psychiatrists (2003) highlighted the extent of alcohol misuse amongst the student population as an area of concern.
University of Leeds: UNIQoLL

- Approximately 90% of students consume alcohol.

- At year 1 approximately 50% of students are within weekly sensible drinking guidelines (i.e. ♀<14 / ♂<21 males).

- Approximately 5% of students are drinking at levels associated with high levels of health risk (i.e. ♀>35 / ♂>50)
Background: e-health, alcohol and social norms

- Health behaviour change using the internet is still in the early stages of development but there is increasing interest in its application.

- Information on the feasibility, utility and effectiveness of web-based interventions is limited (Ritterband et al., 2003; Evers et al, 2005).

- Pre-post results provide some evidence that personalised feedback interventions may be able to reduce unit quantity, maximum consumption per occasion and the frequency of heavy drinking.

- The level and quality of evidence available is relatively poor and therefore further evidence from randomised control trials is needed.
e-UNICAL: Aims

To investigate the feasibility and effectiveness of delivering an electronic feedback and social norms intervention designed to decrease UNIversity students’ Consumption of ALcohol
e-UNICAL: survey content

- CAGE screening test for alcohol dependence
- Average number of alcoholic drinks consumed per occasion
- Number of alcoholic drinks consumed in the last week
e-UNICAL: Student engagement

- 68% UNIQoLL participants expressed interest
- 1075 invited to take part
- 541 gave consent & completed pre
- n=509 were consumers of alcohol
Demographics

- 69% Female
- 49% Final Year
- Mean age 21.3 ± 3.7

Baseline characteristics

- 55% ≥ CAGE score of above 1
- 48% > ♀ 14/♂ 21 units per week
- 6% ≥ ♀ 35/♂ 50 units per week
e-UNICAL: 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
What did students think?

- Found feedback useful: Agree/Strong agree (60%), Unsure (20%), Disagree/Strongly disagree (20%)
- Like to use website again: Agree/Strong agree (40%), Unsure (40%), Disagree/Strongly disagree (20%)
- Make me think more: Agree/Strong agree (60%), Unsure (30%), Disagree/Strongly disagree (10%)
- Recommend to friend: Agree/Strong agree (60%), Unsure (30%), Disagree/Strongly disagree (10%)
- Will reduce amount I drink: Agree/Strong agree (80%), Unsure (0%), Disagree/Strongly disagree (20%)
- Increase amount I drink: Agree/Strong agree (80%), Unsure (20%), Disagree/Strongly disagree (0%)
Was there a change in consumption per week?

Units consumed last week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-Intervention</th>
<th>Post-Intervention</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Was there a change in consumption per occasion?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-Intervention</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Intervention</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Post-minus pre-difference

Per week

-0.5
0
0.5
1

Per occasion

*p<0.05

Control

Intervention

*p<0.05
e-UNICAL phase II: Main study

- Recruit larger numbers (n=1139)
- More detailed recording of consumption
- Investigate the relationship between consumption and other behaviours
- Incorporate 3 month follow-up
e-UNICAL phase II: Preliminary results

![Graph showing units consumed average occasion comparing Control (n=608) and Intervention (n=531) groups before and after intervention.](image)
Will the intervention work outside of the UoL?
Thanks for listening

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