NATIONAL ALCOHOL INDICATORS PROJECT – BULLETIN 14 – TRENDS IN ESTIMATED ALCOHOL-RELATED EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT PRESENTATIONS IN AUSTRALIA, 2005-06 TO 2011-12

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Introduction and Aims: The latest NAIP bulletin shows trends in estimated alcohol-related injuries using emergency department (ED) data from seven Australian jurisdictions (Tasmania not included) between 2005-06 and 2011-12. It is the first Australian publication to document nation-wide trends over time in alcohol-related ED presentations.

Design and Methods: A temporal surrogate measure using primary diagnosis, time of day and day of week was applied to identify alcohol-related ED injuries. This surrogate identified ED presentations for which alcohol is highly likely to have been a major contributor, based on time of day and day of week of the presentation. Data were restricted to presentations with an ‘injury’ related primary diagnosis ICD-10 code. Alcohol-related presentations were defined as those occurring during any one of the following times: ‘Friday night’ (Fridays, 22:00 to 23:59; Saturdays, 0:00 to 3:59); ‘Saturday night’ (Saturdays, 22:00 to 23:59; Sundays, 0:00 to 3:59); and ‘Sunday night’ (Sundays, 18:00 to 23:59).

Results: National trends in estimated alcohol-related ED presentations appeared to increase slightly for every age group (15+, 20-29, 15-19 years). This was partly influenced by the upward trends in Qld. Male presentations were higher than female presentations, with male and female trends tending to track in similar directions across all jurisdictions for all ages, young adults and teenagers. In most jurisdictions rates of presentations for teenagers were close to twice that as for all ages.

Discussion and Conclusions: The higher rate of teenage presentations is likely to be indicative of higher prevalence of alcohol-related night time weekend ED presentations for teenagers. This is in keeping with previous findings on age and alcohol-related harm.

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