

ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE IN CULTURALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

Arabic summary



Introduction

The Arabic speaking communities in Sydney were one of six culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) groups included in this study. Bi-lingual field staff delivered English or Arabic language self-completion questionnaires to households. Data was collected in 2005. The results found that alcohol, tobacco and other drug use were less prevalent amongst Arabic speaking communities than in the general NSW population.

Alcohol

Half the sample currently drank alcohol, and the rate of short term risky drinking was only 1%, much lower than the general population in NSW where the rate was 32% (AIHW, 2005).

Men were more likely to have ever tried alcohol and drink alcohol weekly than women, and those over 25 years were more likely to have tried alcohol than those younger. However, there were still much smaller proportions of drinking among Arabic men and across all age groups than in the general population (AIHW, 2005).

Other Drugs

Very few people had used illicit drugs in the Arabic group, particularly when compared with rates of use in the general NSW population (AIHW, 2005). Only 2% had used an illicit drug in the last 12 months, seven times lower than the proportion across NSW (AIHW, 2005).

Tobacco

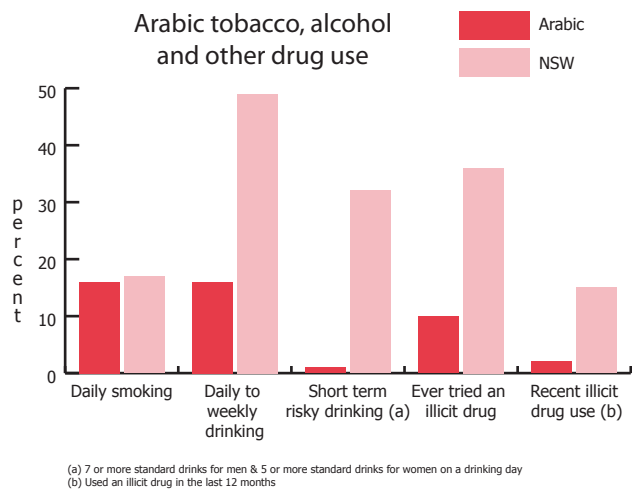
The rate of current daily smoking was the same as in the general population at about 17% (AIHW 2005) and had decreased since 1995 (Jukic, Pino & Flaherty, 1996).

Those born in Australia were more likely to currently smoke daily than those born in Lebanon or Iraq.

About half the current smokers in the Arabic group had tried unsuccessfully to quit smoking in the last 12 months, the vast majority (87%) did not seek any assistance when they tried to quit.

It is recommended that tobacco education and quit smoking programs in the Arabic community focus on:

1. People of Arabic speaking background born in Australia, in order to assist in further decreasing in smoking rates
2. Increasing the proportion seeking help to stop smoking and improve quitting success rates



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Knowledge

There were high levels of knowledge regarding the main health problems associated with tobacco and alcohol use. While knowledge appeared to have increased since 1995 (Jucik, Pino & Flaherty 1996), knowledge of the wide range of associated health problems was still limited.

Heroin was the drug most commonly associated with the term ‘drug problem’ and most selected for being responsible for the most number of deaths (above both tobacco and alcohol).

There was lower confidence in relation to knowledge about other drugs (illicit drugs, analgesics and sedatives) than was the case with tobacco and alcohol.

It is recommended that drug health promotion and education in the Arabic community focus on:

1. The range of health problems that are associated with tobacco and alcohol use beyond lung and liver damage and cancer
2. The seriousness of tobacco related illness and mortality
3. The health impacts of other drugs

Information

More than half selected the doctor or GP as their source of information and help for alcohol and other drugs.

The Arabic group were wide consumers of Arabic language media, with nearly half listening to Arabic language radio for more than 10 hours per week.

It is recommended that:

1. Current programs supporting and training GPs in alcohol and other drug issues, including referral sources, be expanded with particular attention being paid to GPs treating Arabic speaking clients
2. Community language and culturally specific media be utilised for health promotion, particularly radio 2ME, as well as television (SBS, LBC-Arabic and ART-Arabic)

References

AIHW, 2005, ‘2004 National Drug Strategy Household Survey State and Territory supplement’ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Canberra.

Jucik, A, Pino, N, & Flaherty, B, 1996, ‘Alcohol and other drug use, attitudes and knowledge amongst Arabic-speakers in Sydney’ DAMEC, Sydney.

Conclusion

While the overall prevalence of drug use may be lower amongst the Arabic language community, access and equity issues are still of concern, with evidence from this study demonstrating that this is particularly true in relation to current smokers and smoking cessation. See full reports for further information (Donato-Hunt, C, Munot, S, Copeland, J, Black, M, Chambers, K, Cooper-Stanbury, M, Rissel, C & Taylor, R, 2008 ‘Alcohol and other drug use, attitudes and knowledge amongst Arabic speaking communities in Sydney’ DAMEC, Sydney).