

ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE IN CULTURALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

Italian summary



Introduction

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



Alcohol

While a higher proportion of Italians drank alcohol daily than in the general NSW population, the amount of alcohol consumed in the group was low, with three-quarters usually drinking 1 to 2 standard drinks and the rate of short term risky drinking only being at 4%, much lower than the NSW rate of 32% (AIHW, 2005).

Those aged over 40 were more likely to drink alcohol daily than younger people, as were those born in Italy.

Other Drugs

Very few people had used illicit drugs in the Italian group, particularly when compared with rates of use in the general NSW population (AIHW, 2005). Only 4% had used an illicit drug in the last 12 months, compared to 15% across NSW (AIHW, 2005).

Tobacco

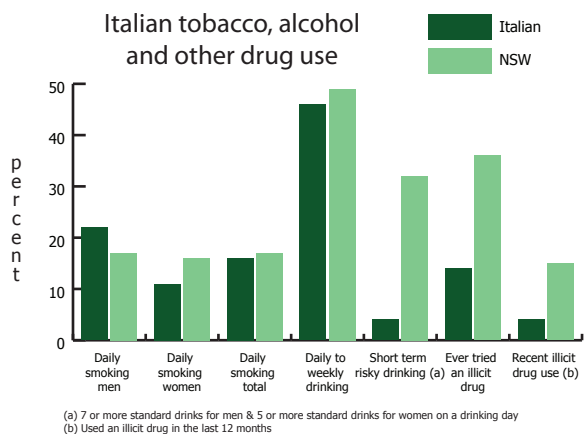
The rate of daily smoking was similar to the NSW rate, however a slightly higher proportion of Italian men smoked compared to men across NSW (AIHW, 2005).

Rates of daily smoking were similar to 1996 (Jukic, Pino & Flaherty, 1997).

About half the current smokers in the Italian group had tried unsuccessfully to quit smoking in the last 12 months, two-thirds did not seek any assistance when they tried to quit.

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

1. Men, in order to assist in decreasing in smoking rates
2. Increasing the proportion seeking help to stop smoking and improve quitting success rates



“While a higher proportion of Italians drank alcohol daily, the amount of alcohol consumed in the group was low, with short term risky drinking only being at 4%”

Knowledge

There were high levels of knowledge regarding the main health problems associated with tobacco and alcohol, however, knowledge of the wide range of associated health problems was 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. Knowledge of other drugs did not appear to increase since 1996 (Jukic, Pino & Flaherty, 1997).

It is recommended that drug health promotion and education in the Italian 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

The doctor or GP was an important source of information and help for alcohol and other drugs.

The Italian group were wide consumers of Italian language media (newspaper, radio, SBS television and Italian language pay television stations).

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 Italian speaking clients
2. Community language and culturally specific media be utilised for health promotion, particularly La Fiamma newspaper, Rete Italia radio, as well as television (SBS, Rai International and Teleitalia).

References

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

Jukic, A, Pino, N & Flaherty, B, 1997, ‘Alcohol and other drug use, attitudes and knowledge amongst Italian-speakers in Sydney’ DAMEC, Sydney

Conclusion

While the overall prevalence of drug use may be lower amongst the Italian 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 the Italian community in Sydney’ DAMEC, Sydney).