

Alcohol related drowning deaths in Victoria, Australia, 2000–2009

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Introduction

There has been increasing evidence to confirm the risk between drowning and alcohol use during aquatic recreational activities (1–4). It is currently estimated that 20% of all drowning deaths in Victoria are attributed to alcohol consumption (5). However, the true extent of alcohol involvement among Victorian drowning deaths is unknown because this information is not routinely collected, an issue that has previously been identified also (6–9). Incomplete information restricts the capacity to examine potential trends in drowning deaths involving alcohol, including demographics of the drowning victims, activity being undertaken, and location of incident. This information is vital to improve current understanding of alcohol involvement in drowning deaths in Victoria, and in developing appropriate drowning prevention strategies.

Methods

A systematic review will be conducted on the available literature relating to alcohol use during recreational aquatic activity, to determine all contributing factors in alcohol related drowning. The Coroners Prevention Unit will conduct a case series of all unintentional drowning deaths reported to the Victorian Coroner from January 2000 to December 2009. Each death will be examined using the CPU database, coroners' findings and toxicological reports to collect demographics, location and activity at time of incident, presence of alcohol, and contribution of alcohol to the drowning according to coroners' findings.

Results

Detailed results will be provided at the conference. The results will give a true indication of the total drowning deaths in Victoria from January 2000 to December 2009, as well as for each age group. The level of contribution that alcohol consumption has had on drowning deaths, as well as whether the presence of alcohol among drowning deaths in Victoria has changed over time. Any trends in demographics, including age, gender, socioeconomic status and cultural background will also be shown, as well as time, location and activity at time of incident, where a positive blood alcohol concentration is identified.

Conclusion

The results of this project will be used to make recommendations for the development and implementation of alcohol awareness and education interventions that are able to be targeted at the most appropriate audiences. There is also the potential to use this information to influence legislative decisions to further prevent alcohol related drowning.

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