

Implications of this work:

- Ex-serving personnel in our study generally found InDEx easy and helpful to use and engagement with the intervention was good
- All personnel used the drinks diary to monitor their alcohol use across the study period
- Everyone who took part in the study drank at a hazardous level, but many didn't feel that they had a problem with alcohol
 - This may explain why some features of the app, such as goal setting, were not used as much as the drinks diary



Contact information

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InDEx

Information about Drinking for Ex-serving personnel: Development of a smartphone application (app) for alcohol monitoring



A study by the University of Liverpool and King's Centre for Military Health Research

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Background:

- Self-reported alcohol misuse remains high among Armed Forces personnel even after they have left service. But many fail to acknowledge that they have a problem.
- Interventions delivered via smartphone applications (apps) appear to be helpful in encouraging people to monitor and change their drinking habits.
- Apps are also more cost-effective than other types of brief interventions and can be accessed from any location.
- The point of transition may be a suitable time for intervention given that personnel will be re-establishing a civilian life and social connections.

This study involved the development of a tailored smartphone app and a feasibility study to test the usability of this app in a hard-to-engage ex-serving population.

Why is InDEx different to existing alcohol apps?

1. Content tailored to an ex-serving population
2. Targets binge drinking and problematic drinking behaviours
3. Focuses on shorter term outcomes of drinking
4. Uses personalised text messaging to provide feedback and prompts

How did ex-serving personnel use the app?

- 31 personnel (who met criteria for hazardous alcohol use) used the app over a 4 week-period.
- Engagement with the app was good and personnel used it on average 29 times during the study.
- The drinks diary was used more frequently than some of the other features.
- Personnel reported drinking on 15 out of the 28 days, with an average of 2 drinks entered per session.

What did they think about the app?

- Personnel found the app easy to use, intuitive and met the interests of veterans who were interested in their drinking habits.
- Feedback on weekly alcohol use helped them understand their drinking habits.
- Setting goals was reported to be useful for those who wanted to drink less.

What issues were identified from the project?

- Personnel wanted a trustworthy app that met their interests.
- They typically used the app at the end of the day or the day after drinking.
- Providing a long term report of personnel's drinking would help make the information more credible.
- Personnel did not believe the recommended drinking guidelines.