

**Report on**  
**Symposium on Screening and Brief Intervention of Alcohol Problems in**  
**South Africa**

**Organised by**

**The Human Sciences Research Council, Department of Health (Limpopo) and  
the Health Behaviour Research Unit of the University of the North**

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Turfloop, University of the North, South Africa**

**Aims of the symposium:**

- To report experiences on programmes of screening and brief interventions of alcohol problems in South Africa
- Report on international and developing countries perspectives on implementing screening and brief intervention programmes for alcohol problems
- To use the experience to develop a national implementation plan for screening and brief interventions of alcohol problems in South Africa

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### **Policy brief**

Although progress has been made in developing a scientific basis for alcohol screening and brief intervention (SBI), training packages are necessary for its widespread dissemination in primary care settings in developing societies. This paper evaluates a training package developed the World Health Organisation, the SBI programme. The training participants consisted of 121 nurses from one rural site (29 clinics in Vhembe District) and one urban site (3 clinics and 6 mobile clinics in Polokwane/Seshego) in South Africa. Although the training effects were at times moderate and all changes were in a direction more conducive to implementing SBI. Health care providers significantly increased in knowledge, confidence in SBI and higher self-efficacy in implementing SBI at follow-up after 9 months after receiving the training. When delivered in the context of a comprehensive SBI implementation programme, this training is effective in changing providers' knowledge, attitudes, and practice of SBI for at-risk drinking.

The results of this study demonstrate that, when delivered in the context of implementing a comprehensive SBI programme, even relatively short training of health care providers in screening and brief intervention techniques can result in gains in provider knowledge, self-efficacy, and expectations about the value of SBI.

The primary health sector must play a greater role in the detection and prevention of alcohol-related harm and not just the management of alcohol problems at the secondary and tertiary levels. Primary health care workers should be involved in detecting and managing patients with different kinds of drinking problems, supporting families and self-help groups, and acting as an advocate of public health for local communities.

Nation-wide training and dissemination of screening and brief interventions for alcohol problems in primary care in different contexts should be implemented.

## Introduction:

### OPENING ADDRESS BY THE REPRESENTATIVE FROM LIMPOPO PROVINCE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND WELFARE – T.J TLAKULA

#### 1. THE LIMPOPO PROVINCE OF SOUTH AFRICA

- The Department of Health and Welfare has positioned itself towards strengthening the prevention and management of alcohol abuse and supports the initiative by the WHO, for the Development and application of strategies for the wide spread, routine and enduring implementation, of early identification and brief intervention of hazardous and harmful alcohol consumption in the Limpopo province, South Africa.
- This initiative is important and innovative and if effectively monitored and evaluated at all levels of care, will assist not only the Limpopo Province but ultimately country as a whole.
- We really need to have provision from the WHO, the National, provincial and Tertiary levels, to ensure that this project is aligned with other developments in all the countries.
- There are different approaches/models being implemented, what we need to do is to ensure that maximum benefit of demonstration projects through thoroughly assessing what works, what doesn't work and why.
- The improvement of accessibility, availability and equity for treatment is addressed at all levels of care, and also calls for multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral approach towards rendering treatment and prevention of alcohol abuse to individuals and their families.
- Development of administrative structures between Department of Health and welfare to ensure co-joint planning, monitoring and coordination of services for the prevention and treatment of alcohol dependency.
- The referral system and demand reduction
- The multi-disciplinary health care providers have been trained for detoxification and Tertiary institutions like Mankweng hospital campus and some general hospital are having units where detoxification takes place.
- We have rehabilitation centers around the province i.e. For North Alcohol and Drug Center in Polokwane, Blouberg Rehabilitation center for alcoholics near Thabazimbi.

#### 2. NATIONALLY

The National Department of Health has established expert committees for matters such as addressing alcohol advertisement warning labels and health messages, a document for substance Abuse Policy guide lines has been formulated and focuses on the community-based treatment approach, the integration of substance Abuse into schools curricula from pre-school to Tertiary level, youth facilities and services for the treatment and rehabilitation e.g. detoxification facilities and services – and work place substance abuse especially alcohol.

- The National Department of Health and National Department of welfare have prominently played a great role in setting up the South Africa Alliance for the prevention of substance Abuse  
Without waste of time, we are not going to dwell on this subject longer, since the National Sub-directorate is also around to dwell on the issue.

#### 3. PROBLEMS

- Alcohol, dagga and other drugs destroy lives in our communities  
They undermine sustainable human development and generate crime
- Drugs affects all sectors in our society and countries at all levels of development in particular, alcohol and other drugs affect freedom and development of young people – the world most valuable asset i.e. youth and children especially in different circumstances such as poverty, family disintegration, relocation and discrimination are more vulnerable to continue with drug experimentation or escalate the abuse and develop the problem of addiction, and develop the problem of addiction, and or trafficking Psycho-active substance abuse and low production as well as poor performance at schools and Universities have been reported in many research studies globally.
- The abuse of alcohol and other drugs are grave threat to the well being of all mankind, the independence of state, democracy, the structure and moral fibre of all societies, the dignity and hopes of millions of people and their families

#### 4. LIMPOPO PROVINCE IS FACED WITH SUBSTANCE ABUSE

- Psycho-active substance abuse and addiction cripple socio-economic development and reconstruction of our nation, specifically because of its pervasive detrimental impact on the physical, psychological, economical and social well-being of the individual, family, community and broad society.
- Alcohol and other drug abuse are serious public health as well as a social concern.  
This reality is emphasized by the inter-relatedness of psycho – active substance abuse and the most severe physical and mental disorders and other disabilities.
- Various other conditions such as physical disabilities, debilitation, chronic disease e.g. chronic gastritis, liver damage, chronic bronchitis, TB, Foetal Alcohol syndrome (FAS) mental illness disorders, (stress, depression, amnesia, insomnia, psychotic syndrome, aggressive disorders) Family violence (child, women abuse neglect or battering) criminal activities i.e. rape assault, homicide, intravenous drug abuse with its shared equipment exposes people to disease such as Hepatitis B including HIV / AIDS.
- Substance Abuse was neglected in the past but however the National Department of Health has formulated guidelines on the treatment and prevention of drug abuse.
- Psycho-active substances impact negatively to the social well – being of families and communities
- The intersectoral collaboration within the government and departments and local government will ensure effectiveness in reducing the psycho-active abuse

#### 5. CHALLENGES

- Young people at Schools and Universities are at high risk in terms of psycho-active substance abuse. Pupils at school reported to be abusing drugs.
- The abuse of alcohol and drugs at Universities throughout the country is common
- Researchers have indicated that cocaine is mostly used by whites in our society
- Students are reported to be selling dagga and alcohol in their rooms – that means running a she-been in the universities' campuses.
- As a result of alcohol and dagga or drug abuse, homicide, suicide, women and child battering are being experienced almost every week.
- Therefore, this initiative by the WHO, the HSRC and the Health Behaviour Research Unit from University of the North together with our health department is warmly welcomed to this province. The pilot project for screening and Brief intervention of Alcohol problems in VHEMBE DISTRICT AND CAPRICORN

DISTRICT is on going – and we hope this will stretch all over the country as a whole and we support it.