

Information about Drinking for Ex-Serving Personnel (InDEx): Development of a smartphone application (app) for alcohol monitoring

Background: Alcohol use is higher in the Armed Forces compared to the general population and many of those misusing alcohol at problematic levels do not recognise this. Previous research in the general population suggests that interventions delivered via smartphones are useful in reducing alcohol consumption, have broad reach and can be more cost-effective than traditional interventions.

Aim: A feasibility study was conducted to both develop and test a tailored app that gathers alcohol consumption data, with the goal of decreasing binge drinking in a veteran population.

Methods: We used qualitative, quantitative and agile development principles to develop an app, including tailored text messages, to monitor and target binge drinking in veterans. For initial testing, expert users were recruited to test and provide feedback during the development. Usability testing was performed with veterans, recruited from a military cohort. Through the app, users were asked to log alcohol consumption and complete a range of psychological measures over a 28-day period.

Results: 30 veterans and 5 experts evaluated the app. Expert users provided more than 50 suggestions of feedback during app development. Veterans commented that they liked the simple and uncluttered interface with quick access to all core pages (*e.g.* add drink, view diary). Users found drink visualisations to be the most helpful.

Conclusions: The agile-centred development and feasibility testing has led to the development of a tailored app which has the potential to change drinking behaviours in a veteran population.