

Understanding and preventing adolescent alcohol and substance use: Developmental, family and peer influences

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This presentation will discuss the influence of developmental, family and peer factors on adolescent alcohol and substance use. An overview of the recent scientific literature will be presented followed by results from the Baylor Adolescent Alcohol Project on the longitudinal influences on adolescent drinking and drug use. The talk will also discuss the implications of this work for prevention of underage drinking and substance use.

Cancer control - Opportunities for behaviour change

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For understandable reasons psychologists have devoted a significant amount of their clinical and research energy to reducing psychological disturbance and improving well-being. However, over the past two decades the potentially important role that psychologists can play in alleviating the burden of illness associated with chronic illness has been increasingly acknowledged. Cancer remains one of the most feared diseases in the developed world. There are indications that it will be the major cause of death in the next decade. The discipline of psychology can make a substantive and important contribution to reducing the burden of illness associated with this disease. Health care interventions aimed at primary prevention may include efforts directed towards reducing the risk behaviours which may cause the disease. For cancer this includes smoking, exposure to the sun and some health behaviours including alcohol consumption. Secondary prevention provides an opportunity to detect the early stages of the disease in a way which will decrease the probability of its progression and lengthen life expectancy. Established Australian programs include screening for cervical and breast and more recently bowel cancer. Tertiary prevention involves attempting to reduce suffering which may be associated with the treatment or presence of the disease. It is common for cancer patients to experience relatively high levels of anxiety, depression and unmet supportive care needs. Cancer survivors and those receiving palliation also have unmet needs. Research indicates that there is a gap between what constitutes best evidence clinical practice and existing care. The opportunity for psychologists to make an important and positive contribution to each one of these areas will be discussed. Potential new roles, aside from the traditional one-to-one therapeutic model, provide exciting opportunities for those interested in health behaviour change.