



## Australasian College for Emergency Medicine

# Media Release

26 June 2019

### Alcohol and Other Drug Harm

#### **One in five New Zealand emergency department presentations are related to alcohol, survey finds**

The Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (ACEM) has released findings from its fifth annual Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) Harm Snapshot Survey, conducted at 2am on Sunday 16 December 2018 in emergency departments across Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia.

Almost one in five presentations to New Zealand emergency departments are related to alcohol, the 2018 Alcohol and Other Drug Harm Snapshot Survey report shows.

Alcohol harm is one of the biggest preventable public health issues facing emergency departments.

'The use of alcohol contributes to harm including injuries related to assaults or altercations, motor vehicle crashes and acute toxication effects such as vomiting, unconsciousness and some mental health presentations', ACEM President Dr Simon Judkins says.

'Alcohol has never been cheaper or more heavily promoted than it is now and we see the very real effects of this in emergency departments in New Zealand. In what is already a high burden environment, we bear the brunt of inadequate alcohol regulation.'

#### **Other drug harm**

The survey was the first of its kind to also quantify the burden of methamphetamine presentations to emergency departments, and in this space New Zealand fared much better – with less than one per cent of presentations to New Zealand emergency departments related to methamphetamine.

This does not diminish that a problem exists, ACEM New Zealand Faculty Chair Dr Andre Cromhout says.

'While our prevalence of methamphetamine presentations to the emergency department in this snapshot was relatively low, we are aware that there are significant methamphetamine-associated problems in our communities.'

'Our focus is the harm alcohol and other drugs are doing in our community and how this is playing out in our emergency departments', Dr Cromhout says.

'We know too that alcohol is a major cause of preventable, non-communicable disease and injury worldwide.'

'The government needs to consider resourcing EDs to better enable them to manage alcohol-related presentations, such as resourcing for screening, brief intervention and referral for treatment programs in the ED', Dr Cromhout says.

ACEM President-Elect Dr John Bonning says the harm of alcohol has never been more visible.

'As a College and as emergency physicians we are keen to continue working collaboratively with government and stakeholder bodies, policy and decision-makers, to facilitate change in the way alcohol and other drugs are regulated and supply systems managed to effect change for our communities and patients.'

Overall, more than 3100 patients (2680 in Australia and 429 in New Zealand) were receiving emergency medical care in the participating EDs at the time of the survey. Fourteen per cent of those presentations were found to be related to alcohol and three per cent related to methamphetamine use.

Read the full report: [ace.mn/AOD19](https://www.acem.org.au/AOD19)

#### **Media contact**

Nicole Newton  
+61 498 068 023

[communications@acem.org.au](mailto:communications@acem.org.au)

[acem.org.au](https://www.acem.org.au)