

KIT-Plus Research Project (2008-2010)

Aim

The aim of the KIT-Plus Research Project was to implement and evaluate the effectiveness of a systematic pastoral care intervention designed to encourage and facilitate positive behaviour in students, particularly the reduction of smoking and other drug use.

The program trained high school staff in a range of strategies that focused on intervening early in a student's use of drugs.

This intervention was compared to practices currently used to address student behavioural needs in Western Australian schools. The intervention was school needs-based and attempted to build, via training and coaching, the capacity of these identified staff to respond effectively to student needs.

Methods

This three-year, group-randomised, intervention trial (2008-2010) was conducted in 21 Western Australian secondary schools (including 9 country schools). Schools were randomly assigned to the intervention condition (n=12) and the comparison condition (n=9).

Data were collected from a cohort of Year 9 students tracked through to Year 11, their teachers in each year, and other pastoral care staff.

Data were collected at three time points from students over the three years of the study – baseline (September 2008), post test 1 (September 2009) and post test 2 (May 2010).

Four key stages:

1. Year 9 students were asked to anonymously identify 'approachable' school staff.
2. 'Approachable staff' were invited to a two-day KIT-Plus training session (including training on general drug use issues, communication methods, models and framework designed to help students as well as how to develop a school plan that implements KIT-Plus strategies)
3. One-on-one coaching sessions for training attendees
4. Collegial support among the trained, school-based team (further training and coaching sessions)

Results/Findings

The study supports the importance of expanding the traditional pastoral care team in schools and strengthening their capacity. The student interviews indicated that students were more inclined to approach a staff member based on their characteristic traits rather than their position in the school. Students also approached staff because they were available, would listen, and presumed he/she possessed knowledge on the topic and on how to help them.

This data indicates that all staff are in a position to implement and sustain school health programs that have a pastoral care approach, and their increased capacity to communicate with students may have a positive effect on youth tobacco control.

Who was involved?

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Publications

Hall, M., Cordin, T., Bruce, K., Paki, D (2011). Strengthening pastoral care to reduce secondary students' harm from tobacco. Final report to Healthway. Perth, Western Australia: Edith Cowan University, Child Health Promotion Research Centre.