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Alcohol outranks other substances in harm to individuals, whānau, and communities in New Zealand (Crossin et al., 2023). The estimated cost of alcohol related harms (ARH) is \$9.1 billion and places heavy physical, emotional, and financial burdens on individuals, whānau, and communities (NZIER, 2024). Hazardous drinking often leads to alcohol use disorder (AUD). Evidence indicates that Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) can augment AUD treatment and assists in ARH reduction (Kelly, 2022), yet it is under-utilised in New Zealand. The reasons for this are unknown. This research will examine A.A.'s usefulness regarding New Zealand's AUD treatment, and what either constrains or enables its acceptance.

Methodology: To this end, a critical realist (CR) paradigm underpins this research. CR's reflexive approach will allow for a multi-layered understanding as to how A.A. is situated within New Zealand AUD treatment, providing the context for theory development regarding A.A.'s potential utility to New Zealand's treatment of AUD and possible reduction of ARH.

Methods: A preliminary scoping review of the literature on this topic is in process and will inform the key informant face-to-face interviews with 12-15 NZ AUD treatment providers. The providers are invited to share their perceptions of A.A. within the treatment context. One in-person and 5-6 online focus groups of AUD treatment consumers to discuss their experiences of A.A. will then be conducted. Additionally, critical discourse analysis of selected text excerpts of A.A.'s literature will provide a cultural contrasting backdrop to inform the findings.

Potential outcomes: Despite evidence of A.A.'s benefits to AUD treatment, controversy surrounding it may influence perceptions and utilisation of A.A. by both providers and consumers. Considering the costs of ARH in New Zealand and A.A.'s potential to reduce this burden, it is important to discover how A.A. is viewed by the AUD treatment providers and those they serve.

Keywords

alcohol related harm; alcoholics anonymous; alcohol use disorder; treatment; perceptions

References

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