

Modifying Alcohol Consumption to Reduce Obesity (MACRO): development and feasibility trial of a complex community-based intervention for men

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Disclaimer: This report contains transcripts of interviews conducted in the course of the research and contains language that may offend some readers.

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Plain English summary

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Plain English summary

Heaty drinking by men who are obese greatly increases their risk of liver disease and of dying prematurely. Effective methods to help such men drink less would have considerable health benefits. We developed an intervention and tested it in a small pilot trial to assess whether or not a large study to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention could be conducted successfully.

Using focus groups, we explored men's attitudes and beliefs about drinking and weight. The intervention was designed to encourage men to drink less through the motivation of weight loss. It involved a face-to-face session, followed by a series of reminder text messages to motivate reduced drinking. It was structured around a behaviour change theory. We also used a control intervention called the Screening and Intervention Programme for Sensible drinking. This was based on Department of Health recommendations.

We then tested the feasibility of a randomised trial of the intervention. Men aged 35–64 years who were obese and who drank > 21 units of alcohol per week were recruited from general practitioner registers and by community outreach. They were randomised to either the experimental or the control intervention and followed up for 5 months.

Recruitment was successful and the target recruitment of 60 men was exceeded. On average, participants drank 47 units per week and three-quarters (78%) engaged in binge drinking at least weekly. A very high follow-up rate was achieved (98%). Participants were enthusiastic about the study and found the study methods acceptable.

This study recruited men at very high risk of liver disease, and delivered a novel intervention with which the men engaged, and which retained almost all to the end. This suggests that a full-scale randomised trial is feasible.

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This report

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