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MEDIA RELEASE

FLOOR PRICE ASSOCIATED WITH DROP IN ACUTE ALCOHOL MISUSE PRESENTATIONS

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SINCE the introduction of an alcohol floor price in the Northern Territory, presentations for acute alcohol misuse at Alice Springs Hospital's intensive care unit have dropped by 54%, according to the authors of a research letter published today by the *Medical Journal of Australia*.

Since 1 October 2018 it has been illegal to sell alcohol for less than \$1.30 per standard drink.

Researchers led by Dr Paul Secombe, an intensive care consultant at Alice Springs Hospital, analysed admission details for patients admitted to the hospital's ICU during the 6 months prior to the introduction of the floor price, and for the 6 months following.

In April of 2018, the local hospital code for alcohol misuse was refined to allow distinction between acute alcohol misuse (the patient presented intoxicated, had acute withdrawal symptoms during their inpatient admission, or had a diagnosis of alcoholic pancreatitis); and chronic misuse (end organ dysfunction attributable to alcohol — cardiomyopathy, chronic pancreatitis, cirrhosis, acquired brain injury attributed to alcohol misuse — or more than four emergency department presentations during the preceding two years while intoxicated).

In the 6 months prior "311 people (56%) were admitted and 246 (44%) during the 6 months after the introduction of the alcohol floor price. The proportion of presentations associated with acute alcohol misuse was 54% lower with the floor price (4.1% v 9.0%), but the decline in the proportion associated with chronic misuse was not statistically significant (9.8% v 13%)," Secombe and colleagues wrote.

"We found that the introduction of the alcohol floor price was followed by a significant reduction in the proportion of ICU admissions associated with acute alcohol misuse in Central Australia. We are investigating whether the proportion of patients presenting with chronic misuse also declines over time," they concluded.

Please remember to credit *The MJA*.

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