

Participants needed to trial early intervention for young people who drink to cope with anxiety

Researchers from the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC) are trialling a new intervention for young people, aged 17 to 24, who experience anxiety symptoms and drink alcohol at harmful levels.

Senior Research Fellow, Dr Lexine Stapinski said the transition into early adulthood is a unique and important period when the risk of developing anxiety and alcohol use disorders is increased.

“The reasons that young people drink have a long-term impact on adverse outcomes,” Dr Stapinski said.

A study of more than 2,000 young people, conducted in collaboration with the University of Bristol, found that drinking was more common among young people with an anxiety disorder and teenagers who drank to cope with anxiety or depression were two times more likely to progress to higher risk drinking as young adults.

Despite the profound potential impacts, less than one in four young people with a mental health or substance use disorder seek help for these problems.

The [inroads](#) program was developed in response to these findings and in consultation with young people. It combines therapist phone/email support with an internet-delivered cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) program.

“*Inroads* is an early intervention adapted from our effective anxiety and alcohol use disorder CBT program for adults and utilises online content that is relevant and engaging for young people, including contemporary images and design,” Dr Stapinski said.

“The internet-based CBT program, paired with email/phone support, avoids common barriers for those seeking treatment, such as judgement, stigma or time constraints.

“By offering early intervention in a format young people are receptive to, *inroads* has the potential to dramatically reduce the considerable burden of anxiety and alcohol use problems.”

Young adults, aged 17 to 24, who drink to cope with the symptoms of anxiety, nervousness, stress or worry are invited to participate in the trial which commenced in December 2017.

For more information, or to refer a young person to the program, please visit the [inroads website](#).

In 2017, Australian Rotary Health provided funding to support an efficacy trial of the *inroads* program. The project is led by [Centre of Research Excellence in Mental Health and Substance Use](#) (CREMS) members Dr Lexine Stapinski, Associate Professor Andrew Baillie, Associate Professor Nicola Newton and Professor Maree Teesson. The research team includes Dr Mark Deady, Erin Kelly, Katrina Prior and Briana Lees.

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