

Evaluation of further training courses for repeat drink-driving offenders

Further training courses for repeat drink-driving offenders represent a sensible approach that complements standard road safety measures for dealing with the problem of those who drive while under the influence of alcohol. The effectiveness of this approach in reducing the percentage of repeat offenders has been substantiated. An evaluation carried out by Dr Jacqueline Bächli-Biétry examined the course model introduced in Switzerland by the bfu in 1995.



Problem and Objective

An effective strategy to combat drink-driving depends on a complementary auxiliary measure aimed at high-risk groups. The effectiveness of further training courses in reducing the percentage of repeat offenders has been scientifically substantiated. The course developed by the Swiss Council for Accident Prevention (bfu) in 1995 for repeat drink-driving offenders has been used in most of Switzerland's cantons since 1997. It is a group course made up of six sessions. The aim of the course is to draw up alternative individual action plans to avoid a repetition of driving while drunk. Specially trained psychologists present the sessions. The procedure evaluation was designed to provide information about the practical application of the course, the impact evaluation, on the other hand, about its effects on the attitudes and knowledge of the participants.

Procedure

A two-stage procedure was chosen for this evaluation study: On the one hand the presenters were asked retrospectively about the course and the practical implementation of the concept by using semi-standardized interviews. On the other, a prospective study of the

courses held in the year 2001/2002 was carried out by means of a questionnaire completed by the participants. The questions and survey method closely followed the EU research project ANDREA.

Results

The questioning of the presenters showed that they were generally satisfied with the course concept. On a scale of 1 to 6 none of the presenters gave the concept a mark under 5 (1 = poor, 6 = very good). The only problem was that alcoholics were not always consistently excluded from taking part on a course – which the course design should have ensured.

In the written examination 124 participants were questioned. The overwhelming majority believed that the course would have a positive effect. On every occasion that questioning was carried out more than 90% of the participants indicated that the course would play a major part in them in future being able to separate drinking from driving. The answers given to specific questions concerning the learning effect confirm this picture: the participants attributed the success of the course above all to the fact that they had had to give serious thought to their drinking habits and had had to develop strategies for overcoming the problem.

Assessment of the items relating to the success of the course considered to be more or less or completely right (immediately and three months after the course).

Items concerning the learning success within the course	Share "more or less right" or "completely right" as % (n = 70)	
	Questioned at end of course	Questioned three months later
On this course I learnt how to give serious thought to my drinking habits.	92	84
I believe that in future I will be able to separate drinking and driving without having to give up alcohol entirely.	92	94
I would recommend that other people who have been apprehended twice for drink-driving should take part on this course.	92	89
On this course I discovered why I used to drink alcohol.	46	48
On this course I learnt under what circumstances I tended to drink alcohol.	52	66

As far as the communication methods are concerned, it is important from a psychological point of view that the participants on a course are of the same opinion as the presenter about which types of communication are effective. The comparison of the assessment of the usefulness of different methods before and after the course produced the interesting result that, after the course, more of the participants gave preference to the methods deemed to be useful from a psychological standpoint than they did before the course. They therefore tended to an increased extent to the view that, during the course, more emphasis should be placed on discussion, talking about topics of a personal nature and working out solutions themselves.

Conclusions

The course model developed in Switzerland by the bfu completely satisfies the requirements which, according to the analysis carried out as part of the EU project ANDREA, a course must fulfil, namely that it should lead to a halving of the repeat offender rate. From a content point of view it would seem important to communicate in-depth knowledge that leads to participants being made more aware of the dangerousness of drink-driving. A further condition for bringing about a change in behaviour is an adequate awareness of the problem (appreciation of incorrect conduct, analysis of personal motives and circumstances). Based on this awareness, the course should provide assistance in establishing effective individual strategies.

Source

Bächli-Biétry, J. (2003), Evaluation der bfu-Nachschulungskurse für Alkoholauffällige im Rahmen der EU-Studie ANDREA. bfu-report no. 52, Swiss Council for Accident Prevention, Berne (with an abstract in English)

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