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Evidence Check: Media Reporting of Alcohol and Other Drug Use

Prepared for **Everymind** by the Priority Research Centre in Brain and Mental Health, University of Newcastle

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Foreword

In 2017 *Mindframe*, managed by **Everymind**, was commissioned by the Australian Government Department of Health to investigate and develop guidelines for the reporting and portrayal of alcohol and other drugs (AOD) in the Australian media. As such, in 2018, **Everymind** commissioned the University of Newcastle to conduct this Evidence Check.

Since 2002, *Mindframe* has provided comprehensive national guidance, training and education, to support safe media reporting, portrayal and communication about suicide and mental ill-health.

Mindframe does this by building collaborative relationships with the media and other sectors that influence the media.

Since the implementation of *Mindframe*, the quality of reporting on mental illness and suicide in the Australian media has significantly improved. *Mindframe's* work has resulted in Australia being recognised by the World Health Organization as one of only two countries to achieve behaviour change for media reporting on suicide.

Mindframe is now applying the same evidence-based principles and methodologies to the *Mindframe* for Alcohol and Other Drugs project.

This Evidence Check was commissioned as part of this project, to review and summarise the media reporting of alcohol and other drug (AOD) use worldwide, to examine the impact of media portrayal of AOD use on stigma and AOD behaviours, and to make recommendations for how to shape media reporting of AOD use to maximise public health benefits.

The recommendations arising from the Evidence Check have been used to inform the development of *Mindframe* for Alcohol and Other Drugs guidelines for communicating about AOD. These evidence-informed guidelines aim to positively influence the quality of media reporting on AOD-related issues, improve community attitudes towards people living with issues related to AOD use and increase help-seeking behaviour.

1. Executive Summary

The purpose of this Evidence Check is to review and summarise the media reporting of AOD use worldwide, to examine the impact of media portrayal of AOD use on stigma and behaviours, and to make recommendations for how to shape media reporting to maximise public health benefits.

The Evidence Check sought to address the following questions:

1. What is the portrayal of AOD use in the media?
2. What is the impact of the media portrayal of AOD on the general community?
3. What (if any) are the existing media reporting guidelines in Australia or elsewhere?

In synthesising the evidence for these questions, the Evidence Check makes judgements about the overall strength of evidence for each question, and makes recommendations arising from the evidence for shaping the future media portrayals of AOD use to maximise the public health benefits.

This review was commissioned by **Everymind**.

Background

AOD use is a major public health concern, directly affecting millions of Australians every year. Public attitudes about AOD use have a significant impact on the course and trajectory of AOD use disorders, affecting efforts to seek help for AOD use and affecting recovery.

The media in Australia (and internationally) play a large role in shaping public attitudes about many important issues, including AOD use, and thus are faced with critical opportunities to change the public discourse about AOD use. It is likely that doing so will affect prevention, early intervention, and treatment efforts for people using AOD and those affected by that use. This Evidence Check seeks to identify such opportunities and provide recommendations about how to maximise these benefits.

Key criteria

The National Health and Medical Research Council Centre for Research Excellence in Mental Health and Substance Use at the University of Newcastle, conducted the Evidence Check. The primary outcome of this Evidence Check was to identify and examine:

- Articles about or media guidelines on the reporting of AOD use;
- Articles describing or commenting on the ways in which AOD use is reported;
- Articles describing the impact of media reporting of AOD use on health and wellbeing, community attitudes, and behaviours in relation to AOD use.

Given the significant changes in media reporting in the last decade, articles published before 2007 were excluded from these results. Articles describing alcohol or tobacco marketing were also excluded.

Search methods

Members of the research team conducted a systematic search of six electronic data bases (Academic Search Ultimate, Business Source Ultimate, CINAHL, Communications & Mass Media, PsycINFO, and Scopus) to capture and review studies about the reporting and impact of AOD use portrayals in the media. Grey literature was also searched to identify any non-indexed research and activity related to these issues.

Key findings

Overall, the review identified 30 studies describing the ways in which AOD use has been portrayed in the media, 28 studies of the impact of media portrayals of AOD use on the general community, and four guidelines for media professionals that outlined key strategies for the responsible reporting of AOD.

1. What is the portrayal of AOD use in the media?

Of the 30 articles identified for inclusion in this part of the Evidence Check, scientific quality was rated as 'Good' according to the NHMRC levels of evidence hierarchy. This meant that studies used methods that were rigorous and replicable. Consistency between studies was also rated as 'Good', with relatively consistent evidence identified that the media portrayal of AOD use was generally alarmist, with reports of increasing 'epidemics' of types of AOD use (moral panic, exaggeration), and most frequently linked to crime, violence and seizures of AOD. Over the past decade a trend was observed in the framing of media portrayals of AOD towards implications for policy regulation, legal/lawsuit issues, and crime/search-and-seizure issues. Much less has been reported about education, prevention, and early intervention/treatment issues for people using AOD and their families. Several Australian studies were identified in the eligible pool of evidence, indicating high relevance to the Australian media and general community.

2. What is the impact of the media portrayal of AOD on the general community?

The Evidence Check identified 28 articles reporting on the impact of media reports about AOD on attitudes, behaviours, and outcomes for the general community around their AOD use. The evidence was of a high quality, with two systematic reviews and a randomised controlled trial identified. However, the impacts reported across these studies was somewhat inconsistent, perhaps reflecting the different methods used to collect and evaluate data. There was 'Good' evidence that reductions in AOD use occur when media portrayals of AOD favour health, psychological, and social risks associated with use, and encourage the public to consider how AOD use fits in with their goals as contributing members of the community. This was particularly effective for women and people not already using AOD. There was 'Excellent' evidence that when drug names were included in media reports, and when AOD use was presented as somewhat normative, initiation of alcohol use increased.

'Satisfactory' evidence was identified that presenting links between alcohol and violence, and overdose statistics had no impact on AOD use, and 'satisfactory' evidence that when focussed on moral panic, exaggeration of prevalence, and violence/crime, the credibility of the media as a reliable and accurate source of information about AOD declined. Again, several Australian studies were identified in the search, indicating high relevance and applicability to the Australian media and general community.

3. What (if any) are the existing media reporting guidelines in Australia or elsewhere?

Four AOD media reporting guidelines were identified in the search, two from Australia, one from the UK, and one global statement. Although the effectiveness of these guidelines has yet to be tested, the content was consistent with the available evidence on the impacts of AOD portrayals in the media. The guidelines were consistent with each other and highlighted the need to minimise stereotyping language and images when reporting about AOD use, and generally to shift focus of reporting onto the health, social, and psychological issues associated with AOD use.

Recommendations

Several recommendations are possible based on the results of the Evidence Check. While the body of evidence provides some support for these recommendations, care should be taken in their application. The key recommendations are that:

- Updated media guidelines for the reporting and portrayal of AOD use to be developed.
- An implementation plan be developed to encourage the uptake of the guidelines by Australian media.
- An evaluation of the effectiveness of the implementation plan and the guidelines be undertaken to determine whether these strategies affect media reporting, and stigma/behaviours around AOD use in the Australian community.
- Further work be undertaken to develop a strategy to empower consumers of AOD-related media reports to evaluate accuracy and credibility of information presented.

2. Introduction

Alcohol/other drug use disorders are a major public health concern

Alcohol/other drug (AOD) use disorders are among the leading contributors to disease and disability worldwide (Gore et al., 2011; Whiteford et al., 2013). Tobacco and alcohol rank second and third in the global burden of non-communicable diseases. Respectively, they were responsible for 6.3 million and 5 million of all global deaths during the period 1990–2010 (WHO, 2014). Deaths due to alcohol and tobacco have only continued to grow since that time (GBD, 2013). AOD use disorders continue to place a significant psychological, social and economic burden on individuals, their families and wider society.

The media play an important role in shaping public opinion about AOD use

In 2010, it was estimated that young people spent 45 hours per week with media, across television, movies, video games, music, and websites; more time than was spent with parents (17 hours) or at school (30 hours, Nunez-Smith et al., 2010). With the pervasiveness of technology into everyday living since that time, these numbers can only have increased.

Media can reflect and impact the attitudes and beliefs of the general community (Nelson et al., 2015), especially around sensitive issues like AOD use. The ways in which media content is developed and framed can shape public discussion about AOD use, can influence the credibility given to different opinions and information about AOD use, and can even affect Government policy and agenda setting for AOD use (Nelson et al., 2015). Whilst this can often be a source for public good, inaccurate or sensationalist portrayals of AOD use in the media can cause panic in the community, leading to stigmatisation of people using AOD and their families (N. Lee, 2017). This can significantly affect help-seeking for AOD use problems, leading to more chronic, complex trajectories for people affected by AOD use. Thus, the media has a significant role to play in the response to AOD in Australia.

To optimise the opportunities for the media to positively influence general community attitudes and behaviours around AOD use, the available evidence about the best methods to do so should be synthesised.

Evidence Check: Patterns of media reporting of alcohol/other drug use and the impact of such reporting on the general community

The present Evidence Check aimed to identify, describe, and evaluate the existing evidence for the patterns of reporting of AOD in the media, and the impact of such reporting on community attitudes and behaviours in relation to AOD use. Published studies, case reports, and grey literature were

included in the review of available literature in this area. The Evidence Check was designed to answer four key questions:

1. What is the portrayal of AOD use in the media?
2. What is the impact of the media portrayal of AOD on the general community?
3. What (if any) are the existing media reporting guidelines in Australia or elsewhere?
4. In synthesising this evidence, what are the recommended next steps in shaping media portrayals of AOD use in Australia?

3. Method

To examine the impact of media reporting of AOD use, a systematic review protocol was employed. This review took a focus on guidelines, research papers, editorials, and case studies where the following issues were described:

- Articles about or media guidelines on the reporting of AOD use;
- Articles describing or commenting on the ways in which AOD use is reported;
- Articles describing the impact of media reporting of AOD use on health and wellbeing, community attitudes, and behaviours in relation to AOD use.

Given the significant changes in media reporting in the last decade, articles published before 2007 were excluded from these results. Articles describing alcohol or tobacco marketing were also excluded. A protocol for the systematic literature review was agreed on by the authors and commissioning agent **Everymind**. The search terms were:

1. (media OR news) AND (report* OR coverage OR framing),
2. (drug* OR alcohol* OR overdose* OR addiction),
3. (guideline* OR standard).

Electronic databases (Academic Search Ultimate, Business Source Ultimate, CINAHL, Communications & Mass Media, PsycINFO, and Scopus) were searched for articles meeting the three key criteria. Details of the study selection procedure can be seen in Figure 1. Three authors (SH, JMMG, JG) screened the titles and abstracts of the 1,230 studies identified via electronic searches and identified 288 potentially relevant articles. Of these, 97 were excluded (published before 2007, 11 were not related to the topic of the review, and 1 reported on direct-to-consumer advertising for prescriptions), leaving 191 full text articles in the sample. The authors (SH, JMMG, JG, FKL) extracted the data for these included articles for analysis. Data extracted from the studies included: country, substance(s) targeted, type of study (literature review, editorial, measurement study), and description of the study/article results.

During the course of the review, an Australian Press Council guideline on reporting of drugs and drug harms was identified. Although this was published in 2001, it was included in this analysis given there is no update on this by the Australian Press Council since that time.

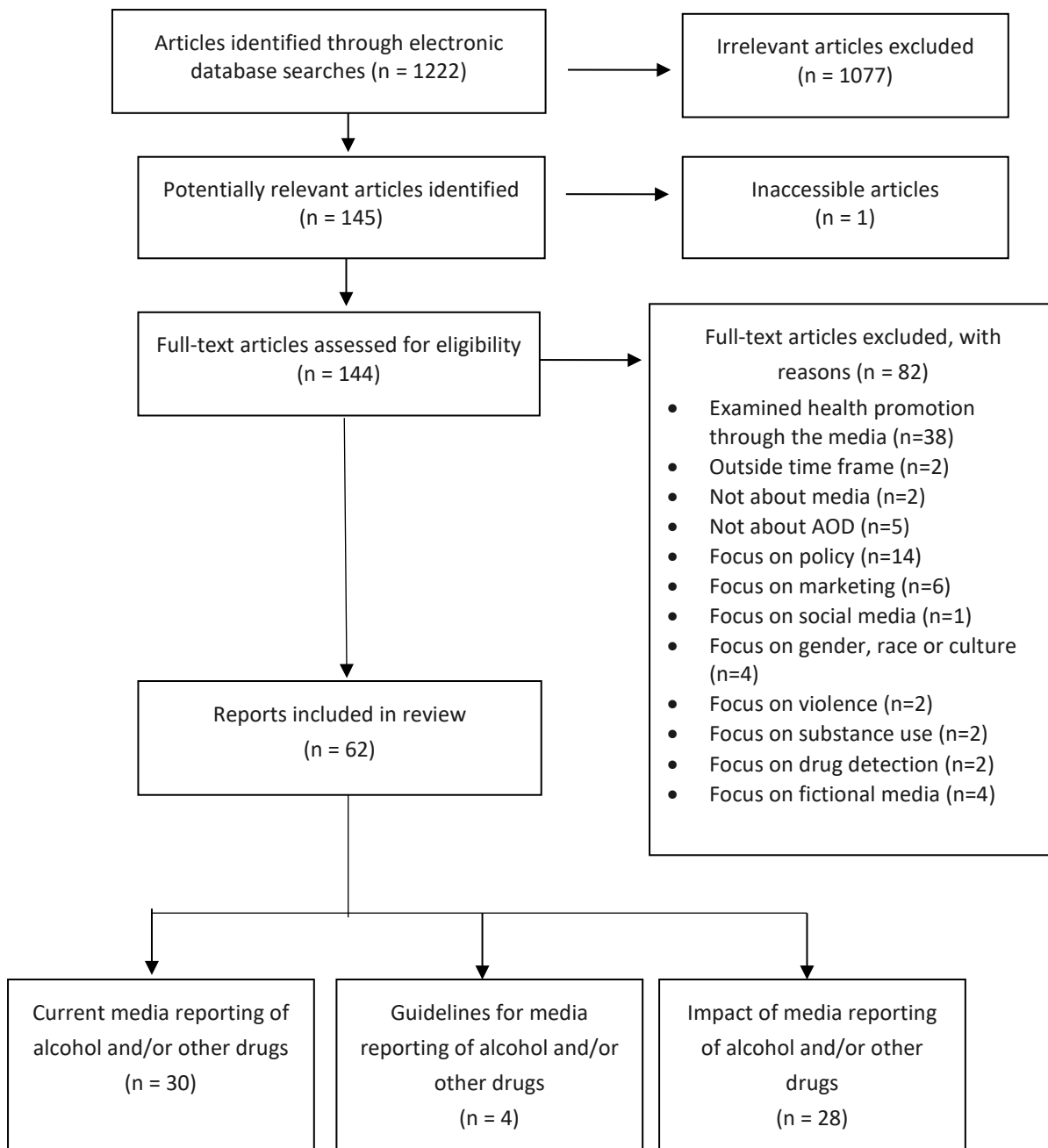


Figure 1. Articles identified and included in the Evidence Check

Assessment of included studies:

Included articles were evaluated using the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Evidence Hierarchy (Coleman et al., 2005) as a guide, with overall impressions of the available evidence summarised according to the NHMRC grading system for recommendations (see http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/file/guidelines/stage_2_consultation_levels_and_grades.pdf for detailed information). An additional category was added to this hierarchy to cover editorials and expert commentaries. This grading system was originally developed to guide the development of clinical guidelines but has been applied in the current Evidence Check in the absence of another relevant system.

The first step in this process was to rate the quality of the evidence reported in each of the included studies according to the NHMRC. Table 1 was used to guide this evaluation, and each included study was given one of these evidence ratings.

Table 1. Levels of evidence used to classify the included studies in this Evidence Check*

Level of Evidence	Study Design
I	A systematic review of Level II studies
II	A randomised controlled trial
III-1	A pseudo-randomised controlled trial (i.e., alternate allocation or some other method)
III-2	A comparative study with concurrent controls (i.e., non-randomised experimental trials, cohort studies, case-control studies, interrupted time series studies with a control group)
III-3	A comparative study without concurrent controls (i.e., historical control study, two or more single arm studies, interrupted time series studies without a parallel control group)
IV	Case series with either post-test or pre-test/post-test outcomes
V	Single case studies, or expert editorials/commentaries

*As per http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/file/guidelines/stage_2_consultation_levels_and_grades.pdf

The second step was to summarise the level of evidence for the five key components recommended by the NHMRC. The quality of the evidence rated was on a scale of A (being Excellent) to D (being Poor) for each of the five components. The four components are:

1. **The evidence base:** the level of evidence and the quantity of evidence in each of the individual included studies as described in Table 1.
2. **Consistency:** the extent to which the body of evidence produced consistent findings in relation to peer-led interventions across the range of included studies.
3. **Generalisability:** how well they matched the aims and questions associated with this review.
4. **Applicability:** to determine the relevance of the included studies to the Australian health care setting.

An evidence matrix was applied, and each of the five key components was given a rating (A–D) for the available studies included in the Evidence Check. This evidence matrix, and definitions for ratings A (Excellent) to D (Poor) are described in Table 2. Recommendations were developed based on this

evidence, including suggestions for media guidelines and areas for further research in the reporting of AOD use in Australia.

Table 2. The matrix employed to summarise the evidence base for media reporting on alcohol/other drug use and related impacts*

Component	A	B	C	D
	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor
Evidence base ¹	several level I or II studies with low risk of bias	one or two level II studies with low risk of bias or a systematic review or multiple level III studies with low risk of bias	level III studies with low risk of bias, or level I or II studies with moderate risk of bias	level IV studies, or level I to III studies with high risk of bias
Consistency ²	all studies consistent	most studies consistent and inconsistency may be explained	some inconsistency reflecting genuine uncertainty around research question	evidence is inconsistent
Generalisability	population/s studied in body of evidence are the same as the target population in question	population/s studied in the body of evidence are similar to the target population in question	population/s studied in body of evidence differ to target population in question but it is sensible to apply this evidence to target population	population/s studied in body of evidence differ to target population and hard to judge whether it is sensible to generalise to target population
Applicability	directly applicable to Australian context	applicable to Australian context with few caveats	probably applicable to Australian context with some caveats	not applicable to Australian context

*As per http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/file/guidelines/stage_2_consultation_levels_and_grades.pdf

¹ Level of evidence determined from the NHMRC evidence hierarchy as in Table 1.

² If there is only one study, rank this component as 'not applicable'.

4. Results

Part I: What is the portrayal of AOD use in the media?

This section of the Evidence Check aimed to identify and describe the main styles of media portrayals of AOD use worldwide. Priority was given to research articles that sampled large numbers of media reports and sources across countries and AOD types.

Evidence Base

Table 3 displays a summary of the 30 studies identified as describing patterns of reporting on AOD use in the media (see Appendix A). Of these, two involved interviews with journalists or the general public (Level III-2 evidence), and four were expert editorials or commentaries on the field (Level V evidence). The most commonly published studies undertook a content analysis of television, newspaper, social media, or radio news stories over a designated period (24 studies) and this was classified as Level III-2 evidence (akin to a cohort study).

The majority of studies were carried out in the USA (n=13), five were from across Europe, four were from the UK, and one study each was identified from Canada, Mexico, and Brazil. Five studies from Australia were identified in the search. The focus of these articles was primarily alcohol use (17 studies), followed by illicit drugs in general (10 studies), crystal methamphetamine ('ice', n=4), cocaine (n=3), heroin (n=3), tobacco (n=3), cannabis (n=2), and opioids (n=2) or prescription opioids (n=1). Note that in some studies, more than one AOD use issue was discussed. In addition, some studies took a specific population focus on pregnant women (n=3), people from LGBTBIQ communities (n=1), and minority cultural groups (n=4).

Overall, the evidence base for the included studies was rated B (Good) in line with the NHMRC evidence matrix.

Consistency

Types of stories covered

Content analyses of media reports over time generally revealed that the focus of stories related to AOD use favoured 'alarmist' reports, links to crime and violence, and included calls for tighter controls on AOD imports and production. Generally, people using illicit substances were presented as delinquent, violent, and weak, and reports suggested that the pathway towards these negative outcomes for anyone using AOD was forgone and unavoidable. The concern is that a focus on these issues is inaccurate, and does not allow a wider discussion on social, socioeconomic, mental health, and other health issues associated with AOD use (Mastroianni & Noto, 2008).

USA-based reports on heroin and cocaine over the period 2000-2015 focussed on violence, crime, addiction, and health risks, but there was an absence of public health and harm stories to encourage

a change in help seeking for these issues (Orsini, 2017). News stories in this study used drug seizures to trigger media reports on AOD use, along with tragic or controversial events involving public figures (Orsini, 2017). In Australia, an analysis of newspaper articles from 11 different publications between 2003-2008 supported this finding, with dominant portrayals of heroin emphasising law enforcement or criminal justice actions, and the legal problems associated with use (C. Hughes, Spicer, Lancaster, Matthew-Simmons, & Dillon, 2010). Across other illicit drugs, the same pattern was found, with 70% of news articles reporting on legal or criminal consequences of AOD use, followed by health problems (14%), social problems (10%), and cost to society (10%). Only 5% of articles discussed harms associated with AOD use, and 7% reported research on drug market changes (C. E. Hughes, Lancaster, & Spicer, 2011). Celebrity or elite drug use was the third most popular topic (C. E. Hughes et al., 2011). Articles with 'good' moral evaluations of illicit drugs were only identified in 2% of stories (C. Hughes et al., 2010). Differences were observed in the type of drug and framing of the news stories, such that heroin-related articles were primarily concerned with legal issues, amphetamine-related articles emphasised the 'crisis' and bad moral evaluations of use and users, and for ecstasy, the focus was on negative health consequences associated with use (C. Hughes et al., 2010).

In an examination of the framing around 'designer drugs', Swalve and DeFoster (2016) identified four emergent themes in the news reports related to the issue of 'bath salt' use (Zombie drug). These were (1) vivid and sensationalist descriptions of the violence associated with the drug, (2) discussion of the drug use as an 'epidemic', (3) appeals to tighten legislation around the drug, and (4) silence on issues related to mental health. This was very different from the scientific literature on this topic and did not take into account key sources on this drug. The authors highlighted the similarities between the framing of stories on this drug, and the framing of media stories around illegal drugs and drug use in general. A real concern was identified about an absence of presentation of other factors (mental health problems, social and environmental issues) that shape drug effects.

Cobbina (2008) reported that qualitative differences existed in the media portrayal of crack cocaine and methamphetamine, with those from white middle class or affluent backgrounds profiled as victims of the drug rather than criminals. The reverse was true for reports involving impoverished African American communities. In another USA-based study, the media accounts of heroin and non-prescription opioid use tended to present white and black drug use as different and separate, humanising white drug users while perpetuating the association between crime, violence and AOD use in black and Latino populations. This was also found in Australian content reviews among African migrant communities, whereby the majority of news reports identified that focussed on these communities discussed the legal and moral issues associated with AOD use in this population, rather than a health and wellbeing focus as was noted in non-African populations in Australia (Horyniak, Lim, & Higgs, 2016).

Pregnant women were also a focus, particularly for alcohol use, often framing mothers as 'healthy' or 'unhealthy' depending on whether they consistently put their children in danger by drinking alcohol while also being a mother (Simon, 2014). This was not done at all for fathers. Similar patterns were observed for drug use in pregnancy, with reports did not focus at all on what could be done to help women or children affected by alcohol use (Springer, 2010).

One study examined the content of gay, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) newspapers for trends in the reporting of crystal methamphetamine in this community (Schwartz & Willis, 2010). Results indicated that crystal methamphetamine was framed as a 'gay' problem, similar to the way that AIDS was reported in the 1980s.

In contrast, for alcohol-related issues, content analyses over the past decade revealed an increasing focus in the media on issue of restrictions and policy governing beverage services, with a decline in articles promoting alcohol use, and those that involved in alcohol industry representative (e.g., Azar et al., 2014). Celebrity drinking and driving were a feature, dominated by a legal or violence issues and career limitations for the celebrity involved with little discussion of personal responsibility or help seeking options for problematic alcohol use (K. C. Smith, Twum, & Gielen, 2009). This was viewed as a missed opportunity to encourage preventive action against alcohol use problems, particularly in young people. This also featured in Australian reports on alcohol use problems, centred around sporting stars and problematic alcohol use (A. C. T. Smith, Stavros, Westberg, Wilson, & Boyle, 2014).

For prescription opioids, the evidence was similar, and suggested that there was a shift in framing of stories about this 'acceptable' and 'different' form of AOD use problem, with increasing references to the health, legal, and political aspects of this drug appearing over time (LaVail, 2012). The same was true for media reports regarding cannabis over time, with favourable accounts of cannabis use being reported in more recent news stories about this drug (e.g., McGinty et al., 2016). This was particularly so in the USA, where legalisation issues were a prominent feature of news reports, with both pro- and anti-legalisation arguments well considered and presented.

Moral Panic

This form of media reporting was described as the dominant view of AOD use and AOD users over the last decade in the studies included in this review. This type of reporting presents AOD use and AOD users as weak, degraded, morally unfit or dangerous, predatory, and amoral (Keary, 2017). Such styles of reporting affected public opinion about AOD use and AOD users, contributing to 'drug panic', especially around new or emerging drugs of concern. Importantly, Keary (2017) highlighted the key role of media reports in influencing public attitudes and discourse around AOD use, and challenged media reporters to promote a more critical and realistic conversation on AOD use and AOD users going forward.

Media Exaggeration

This framing of media reporting refers to the meteoric rise of AOD use, often with regards to particular drug types or in particular groups within the community. The general consensus of studies looking at this style of reporting was that the reported rise of AOD use was often disproportionate to the actual size of problem and was frequently inconsistent with evidence, and shaped public perceptions and anxiety about the drug of concern (Usher, Clough, Woods, & Robertson, 2015). For example, the media representation of pregnant women and alcohol consumption reported by Lee et al. (2016) found that the media reports of a new study on the impact of alcohol on newborn children

were entirely inconsistent with the actual research article published, particularly in reporting that women who drank alcohol during pregnancy lowered the IQ of their children.

Two key emerging drug ‘epidemics’ that were identified and examined by the studies included in the review were prescription opioids and crystal methamphetamine.

For prescription opioids, La Vail (2012) indicated that the consistent framing of the increase in prescription opioid use as an ‘epidemic’ by health and media professionals increased public alarm about the severity of the problem. In the USA, news reports described ‘typical’ users as older males seeking pain relief, or younger females seeking a high, which is inconsistent with the trends in use of this substance. In addition, the reports on the ‘outbreak’ in opioid use in the USA has increased more so than overdose deaths due to the drug itself (McLean, 2017).

In the case of crystal methamphetamine, Ayers et al. (2012) suggested that the reporting of the rise of this drug was significantly disproportionate to its actual status as a social issue. This was also found in Australia, with an editorial drawing links between the ‘ice epidemic’ reported in Australia media over 2010-2013 and the relatively stable use of methamphetamine by Australians over the same time period (Usher et al., 2015). A need for more cautious and accurate reporting was emphasised, and more considered use of the term ‘epidemic’, particularly by media and politicians.

Whilst a common frame in the reporting of AOD use and AOD users, focusing reports on these ‘alarmist’ issues take the population’s attention (and that of policy makers) away from the persisting social problems associated with AOD use and onto public policies for control and regulation around use (Mastroianni & Noto, 2008).

Generalisability

All of the included studies met all key criteria of interest to the Evidence Check. This translated to an overall NHMRC evidence matrix rating of A (Excellent, see Table 4) for the generalisability of the included studies to the ways in which AOD use is portrayed in the media.

Applicability

Five studies were conducted on Australian news stories, and the results of these content analyses supported those found from studies in the USA, UK, and Europe. Some small differences existed in the content of reporting of drug trends, drug legalisation issues, and drug crimes. However, these reflect the differences in laws between countries rather than a difference in the framing of stories. Overall, according to the NHMRC body of evidence matrix, the applicability of the identified studies to the Australian setting was rated as A (Excellent, See Table 4).

Summary of availability and quality of evidence

Table 4 displays the overall evaluation of each component of the evidence drawn from the included studies in the Evidence Check that met all key criteria for inclusion. In summary, based on the above analysis and Table 4, the findings of the review of all included studies is consistent in describing how the media generally portrays AOD use in news and other reports. That is, generally, the media portrayal of AOD is overwhelmingly negative, with dominant themes linking drugs and crime, suggesting that people using AOD are weak or immoral, and that the devastating consequences of

drug use on an individual are inevitable (GCDP, 2017). These perceptions and stereotypes contrast with what experts consider to be the primary reasons for AOD use, which include experimentation, enjoyment, socialising, enhancing performance, and self-medication to manage moods and physical pain (GCDP, 2017). The sheer number of media reports covering deviant and criminal behaviour associated with AOD use, conveys a message to the public that this is the norm for anyone using AOD and is an inevitable consequence of any AOD use. In reality, beyond contravening drug laws, the majority of people using AOD do not break any criminal laws.

Over time there has been an increasing focus, across all AOD, on reporting implications for policy regulation, legal/lawsuit issues, and crime/search-and-seizure issues (Nelson et al., 2015). This has been at the expense of reporting on education, prevention, and early intervention and treatment issues for people using AOD and their families. A broader discussion about these issues is warranted in the media, as the impact of these portrayals has the potential to shape public attitudes towards people using AOD, their families, and help-seeking behaviours for people using AOD. The ‘shame’ of addiction is a reason why people with drug problems – and their families – often do not seek help (UKDPC, 2012).

Table 4. Overall evaluation of included studies that describe the media portrayal of AOD use*

Component	Rating	Description
1. Evidence base	B	Good: multiple level III studies with low risk of bias
2. Consistency	B	Good: most studies consistent and inconsistency may be explained
3. Generalisability	A	Excellent: the populations included in the review are the same as the target population in question
4. Applicability	A	Excellent: applicable to Australian context

*As per http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/file/guidelines/stage_2_consultation_levels_and_grades.pdf

When journalism professionals were interviewed in Brazil regarding the news-making process for AOD use issues, Mastroianni and Noto (2008) reported that the journalists themselves have a negative view of the coverage of AOD use in the media, but experience major barriers to changing the discourse around AOD use. These barriers include a lack of specialised personnel to access in relation to the issues, and time and knowledge about AOD use. These journalists highlighted the need for specialised guidelines be developed on the reporting of AOD use in the media.

A noteworthy observation in several research studies was the important role of researchers in affecting media reporting on AOD use and research findings around these issues. In at least one study (e.g., E. Lee et al., 2016), media releases provided by the research team associated with the new study findings, emphasised potentially ‘newsworthy’ aspects of the results, and contributed to the ‘exaggeration’ and inconsistencies with the original research article. Thus, it is the responsibility of researchers to provide a balanced view of their research when preparing media releases.

Part II: What is the impact of the media portrayal of AOD use in the general community?

Evidence Base

Table 5 (Appendix B) displays a summary of the 28 studies identified in the Evidence Check that provided evidence of the impact of media portrayals of AOD use on members of the general community. Much stronger evidence existed in this area of the review, with two systematic reviews (Level 1 evidence), one randomised trial (Level II evidence), two quasi-randomised trials (Level III-1 evidence), and eight cohort studies (Level III-2 evidence). In addition, four time-series studies were located (Level III-3 evidence), six case-series (Level IV evidence), and five expert commentaries (Level 5 evidence).

The majority of studies were using American (n=16), Australian (n=5), or UK (n=4) participants, and one each from Mexico, Poland, and Canada were identified. Eight studies focussed on alcohol use, the most common focus, followed by crystal methamphetamine (n=4), cannabis (n=3), tobacco (n=3), opioids (n=3), heroin (n=1), and synthetic cannabis (n=1). Three studies focussed broadly on illicit drugs.

The available evidence on the impact of media reporting on AOD use (and related behaviours) is excellent (A).

Consistency

Although much more evidence existed examining the impact of media reporting on AOD use, these studies employed different methods to measure different impacts in different groups within the community. These various areas and impacts are summarised below.

Reductions in AOD use associated with exposure to media reports about AOD use

A randomised controlled trial (Level II evidence) among school students assessed the impact of media reports on cannabis that encouraged students to think about the discrepancy between themselves as cannabis users versus themselves as aspirational young people (Slater, Kelly, Lawrence, Stanley, & Comello, 2011). Results indicated that those exposed to these particular campaigns reported significantly reduced cannabis use than their counterparts did. Of note here is that deploying such discrepancies is a key feature of motivational enhancement strategies, an evidence-based treatment technique designed to facilitate change in AOD use. Similar results were reported for alcohol use, in a sample of the general population exposed to media health messaging on the health risks associated with binge drinking alcohol (Level III-1 evidence). Those participants exposed to media reports linking binge drinking to accidents, car accidents, and unprotected sex reported themselves at significantly higher risk than did those exposed to events that did not link alcohol to these outcomes (Ayers & Myers, 2012).

An Australian survey reported that media portrayals of illicit drugs conveying an 'anti-drug' message was effective in increasing perceptions of risk, reduced acceptability of AOD, and reduced likelihood to use AOD in the future (Lancaster, Hughes, & Spicer, 2012). This was more true for females (over

males), non-users (over recent and past users), and those who felt they were less susceptible to AOD use (Level III-2 evidence).

Increases in AOD use associated with exposure to media reports about AOD use

In 2006, the Harvard Medical School and National Institute on Ageing released data indicating a potential positive health benefit of drinking red wine (Weiss, 2007). Media outlets picked up this research, and following media reports, red wine sales significantly increased in the USA (Level V evidence only, Weiss, 2007). In a study conducted in Mexico, using a cross-sectional survey of 1,243 young people, Lee et al. (2009) reported that exposure to media reports around alcohol use in young people elevated their perceptions that alcohol use was 'normative' and in doing so, was associated with increased self-reported alcohol use intentions and behaviour (Level III-2 evidence).

Two systematic reviews (Level I evidence) of the available literature on adolescent exposure to media reports about alcohol (Anderson, de Bruijn, Angus, Gordon, & Hastings, 2009) indicated that adolescents both initiated alcohol use (in non-drinkers) and increased their use (if already drinking) as a function of exposure to pro-alcohol messages in media portrayals. The same result was again reported among adolescents (aged 12-17 years), with 83% of studies in the second systematic review indicating media reports of AOD use was associated with tobacco smoking initiation, use of illicit drugs, and alcohol consumption (Level 1 evidence, Nunez-Smith et al., 2010). The evidence was strongest for tobacco and alcohol. The same result was found for tobacco use in rural USA, with media messages being associated with initiation of tobacco use (Level III-2 evidence, Branstetter, Lengerich, Dignan, & Muscat, 2015). The same result was reported in Poland in relation to both tobacco and alcohol (narrative review, Level V evidence, Burzyńska, Binkowska-Bury, & Januszewicz, 2015).

An association between the number of media reports mentioning generic and branded-names of prescription opioids between 1999-2005 and fatal opioid poisonings was reported by Dasgupta (2009, Level III-3 evidence), explaining 88% of the variance in mortality associated with opioids during this decade. Interest in AOD has also been demonstrated to increase significantly following media reports, with Forsyth (2012, Level III-3 evidence) providing evidence that reports of drug-related deaths in the media leads to a significant interest in buying the drug related to those deaths.

No change in AOD use associated with exposure to media reports about AOD use

Several studies reported that, following exposure to randomly presented media reports about AOD use, there was no change in concerns about risks associated with AOD use or change in AOD-related behaviours (Level III-1, III-2, III-3 evidence). This included college students exposed to randomly selected messages suggesting that alcohol was a contributing factor in violent crimes and car accidents (Slater, Goodall, & Hayes, 2009), and Australians using heroin interviewed after seeing media reports on overdoses (Miller, 2007). In addition, another study indicated that media reports served to reinforce the behaviours of the people exposed to them, with those not using continuing not to use, and those who were already using continuing to use.

Media as a trusted source of information about AOD use

Beaudreault (2010) asked participants in the USA to reflect on media exposure about crystal methamphetamine (Level IV evidence). Most (85%) of the sample reported that the news was their primary source of information about methamphetamine, with 79% indicating that they had recently watched news coverage on seizures of methamphetamine in their local areas. Importantly, however, when assessed on knowledge and perceptions about methamphetamine use, 93% of the sample reported inaccurate perceptions about methamphetamine, in favour of an exaggerated view of the problem. In an Australian survey of 2,296 young people, only one third saw the media as a good source of information on illicit drugs (Level III-2 evidence, Lancaster et al., 2012). Close to 60% of the sample (aged 16-24 years) reported not trusting journalists to tell the truth about illicit drugs, and 58% indicated that the news media exaggerated the dangers of illicit drugs (Lancaster et al., 2012). When considering what influenced their perceptions about illicit drug use, young people cited the media as most influential, even above that of their peers, and 70% agreed that the media influenced government policy on illicit drugs (Lancaster et al., 2012). Males were much less likely to be influenced by the media on illicit drugs than were females. The most effective portrayals of illicit drugs were those reporting adverse health and social consequences, especially links to mental health problems and pill spiking (C. Hughes et al., 2010). Young people reported that these types of media stories were more powerful because they were a more persuasive risk message that was more relevant to this age group.

In a different result, media reporting of a new, emerging drug Kronik (a form of synthetic cannabis) created a state of 'moral panic' in Australia, significantly increasing Google searches using this term (Bright, Bishop, Kane, Marsh, & Barratt, 2013). This led directly to Federal and State Governments banning individual synthetic cannabinoid agents in Australia, which while well-intended, led manufacturers to develop new synthetic substances that were not affected by these bans. This Level IV evidence suggests that policies implemented in the middle of media-induced moral panic, can increase awareness of banned products, and accelerate production of new drugs that are not subject to such scheduling.

Changes to policy and practices associated with exposure to media reports about AOD use

Borwein et al. (2013, Level III-3 evidence) tracked changes in prescription rates by medical professionals in the USA, alongside media reports about high levels of prescribing. Results indicated that the media reports had an observable impact on prescribing rates of opioids, with rate significantly decreasing following such reports. In a similar result, Bright et al. (2013) reported on the relationship between increasing Oxycodone prescriptions (an opioid) in the USA and media exposure to this issue across 27 North American newspapers. Following the media reports, prescribing rates of Oxycodone significantly decreased.

Overall, across these impacts, the evidence suggesting that media portrayal of AOD use has demonstrable and direct impacts on AOD use and related issues is very strong. The nature of this influence is less clear. According to the NHMRC evidence matrix, the overall consistency is rated as B (Good) and averaged across:

- A (Excellent) - that when media focuses on presenting AOD use as ‘normative’ or even with health benefits, this is associated with increases in AOD use, increases in initiation of AOD use, and increased sales of alcohol.
- B (Good) – that media portrayals, when focussed on identifying discrepancies between AOD use and desired life goals, health risks, and linking AOD use (especially binge drinking) to accidents and unprotected sex, there is a correspondent reduction in AOD use, especially for females and non-users.
- C (Satisfactory) – that media portrayals do not change AOD use in people who are already using or engaging in the risky behaviours.
- C (Satisfactory) – that media portrayals of AOD use are exaggerated and not as credible as other sources, but that credibility increases when adverse health and social effects are emphasised.
- C (Satisfactory) – that media portrayals can affect prescribing practices (for the better), can affect policy and other practice (not always positively), and that reporting of drug names associated with drug-related deaths and ‘epidemics’ increase interest in the drugs.

Generalisability and Applicability

The target populations for the studies identified in this section of the Evidence Check were highly relevant and translatable to the Australian population. Thus, the Generalisability rating (based on the NHMRC evidence matrix, Table 2) was rated B (Good), and Applicability was A (Excellent).

Summary of availability and quality of evidence

As indicated in Table 6, the findings of Evidence Check reveal robust impacts on attitudes and behaviours involving AOD use following exposure to AOD use in the media.

Table 6. Overall evaluation of the included studies examining the impacts of media reporting of AOD use*

Component	Rating	Description
1. Evidence base	A	Excellent: several level I or II studies with low risk of bias
2. Consistency	B	Good: some inconsistency reflecting heterogeneous methods and uncertainty around the question
3. Generalisability	B	Good: populations studied in the body of evidence are similar to the target population
4. Applicability	A	Excellent: directly applicable to the Australian context

*As per http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/file/guidelines/stage_2_consultation_levels_and_grades.pdf

Part III: What (if any) are the existing media reporting guidelines in Australia or elsewhere for the reporting of AOD in the media?

This section of the Evidence Check sought to identify and review current reporting standards/guidelines for the media, in relation to AOD use, that were available worldwide. In the review of these guidelines, key elements were identified to guide recommendations for media portrayals of AOD in Australia that minimise stigma and maximise the public health benefits of such reporting.

Evidence Base

Four guidelines were identified from across the globe that provided some recommendations for journalists and media professionals in presenting information about AOD use and people using AOD. Three of these guidelines were developed and published by experts from the AOD field (AODMW, 2017; GCDP, 2017; UKDPC, 2012), with some input from a consultant from the journalism field in the case of UKDPC (2012) and GCDP (2017). One guideline was published by the Australian Press Council in 2001 and outlined broad strategies for what to avoid when reporting about AOD. The AOD media watch guideline (2017) is an Australian-produced resource. See Table 7 (Appendix C) for a summary of these guidelines.

There is evidence that the UKDPC (2012) and the GCDP (2017) guidelines were developed via a formal and rigorous process of expert stakeholder input and integration with evidence about the relationship between media reporting and stigma associated with AOD use. Within these guidelines, Level III-2 and V evidence is apparent for the data demonstrating the need for a change in media reporting of AOD use, but only Level V evidence is presented regarding the recommended changes to media reporting that should now occur.

There is no evidence in the published literature about uptake of these guidelines in journalist and other media settings, nor is there any evidence that adherence to these guidelines has an impact on stigma surrounding AOD use. This is an area for further research and development.

Overall, evidence for the guidelines on the media reporting of AOD use is C (Satisfactory), according to the NHMRC levels of evidence matrix.

Consistency

Across the four reporting guideline documents, similar themes consistently emerged as core principles to reduce the stigma associated with the media reporting of AOD use. These are summarised as:

- When reporting on increases in AOD use trends, include the prevalence of the ‘emerging’ drug of concern in the context of other AOD use.
- Remember that the person at the centre of the story is somebody’s daughter/son, mother/father, or another important person. Be sensitive to the ways in which media reporting of AOD use can affect a person’s life.

- Suggest a shift in framing away from people with drug problems being treated as self-indulgent pleasure seekers who could get rid of their addiction if they wanted to, towards being people with a serious illness who need help.
- It is not prejudicial or stigmatising to treat someone who has broken the law - whether through possession of drugs or a crime committed to pay for drugs – as having done something wrong. However, this is as far as the description needs to go.
- Avoid reporting stereotypical descriptions of AOD use or people using AOD, including stigmatising images (e.g., needles, people passed out, etc.). Instead, try to source key informants (e.g., researchers, clinicians, people with a lived experience, etc.). In doing so, try using anonymous sources (offer informants methods to disguise their identity), seek signed consent, and provide fair, sensitive, and accurate labels for all images. Understand that in some cases, a same-day comment may not be practical. Remember the impact that the story may have on the informant's life.
- Avoid the use of stigmatising language. The UKDPC (2017) and GCDP (2017) guidelines provided handy suggestions for alternative language to use when reporting (see Box 1, below).

Words and phrases to use and avoid

Avoid	Alternative	Because
junkie / crackhead / smackhead / pothead	dependent drug user / service user (where appropriate) / X is dependent on ...	Where possible, remind the audience that the subject has not always been a drug user, and has the potential to recover. Junkie is particularly problematic because it suggests that the drug user is worthless. 'Addict' is a compromise option, but does not separate the person from the condition.
drugs shame	drugs tragedy	The 'shame' of addiction is a reason why people with drug problems – and their families – often do not seek help.
former junkie/addict	Is their previous drug use relevant to the story?	Irrelevant references to a previous drug dependency can reinforce the perception that someone can never overcome addiction.
reformed junkie/addict	Where previous drug use is relevant: recovered addict / former addict	Avoid suggesting that being dependent on drugs is a moral failing.
hopeless junkie/addict	Are they really without any hope?	A dependent drug user may at times feel they have no hope of recovery, but in general this should not be reinforced in reporting, unless their lack of hope is the specific point being made.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> USE	<input type="checkbox"/> DON'T USE
Person who uses drugs	Drug user
Person with non-problematic drug use	Recreational, casual, or experimental users
Person with drug dependence, person with problematic drug use, person with substance use disorder; person who uses drugs (when use is not problematic)	Addict; drug/substance abuser; junkie; dope head, pothead, smack head, crackhead etc.; druggie; stoner
Substance use disorder; problematic drug use	Drug habit
Has a X use disorder	Addicted to X
Abstinent; person who has stopped using drugs	Clean
Actively uses drugs; positive for substance use	Dirty (as in "dirty screen")
Respond, program, address, manage	Fight, counter, combat drugs and other combatant language
Safe consumption facility	Fix rooms
Person in recovery, person in long-term recovery	Former addicts; reformed addict
Person who injects drugs	Injecting drug user
Opioid substitution therapy	Opioid replacement therapy

BOX 1. Examples of non-stigmatising language to use when reporting on AOD use (UKDPC, 2017 – left; GCDP, 2017 – right).

Generalisability, and Applicability

The recommendations outlined in the AODMW (2017) and Australian Press Council (2001) guidelines are in support of the larger, international documents, indicating high relevance to the Australian context. These domains were given an A (Excellent) rating (see Table 8).

Summary of availability and quality of evidence

As indicated in Table 8, the guidelines retrieved from the review of the literature reveal that a robust set of core principles need to be apply for the reporting of AOD use (and people using AOD) in the media. Australian guidelines supported international guidelines in this area.

Table 8. Overall evaluation of the four guidelines that provide recommendations for the media reporting of AOD use*

Component	Rating	Description
1. Evidence base	C	Satisfactory: Level III studies and Level V commentaries
2. Consistency	A	Excellent: all studies consistent
3. Generalisability	A	Excellent: populations targeted by the guideline documents are the same as the target for the review
4. Applicability	A	Excellent: results are directly applicable to the Australian context

*As per http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/file/guidelines/stage_2_consultation_levels_and_grades.pdf

5. Summary and recommendations

This Evidence Check set out to identify, evaluate, and summarise the available evidence for the methods and impact of the portrayal of AOD use in the media. The results provide clear evidence that what the media says about AOD use can influence initiation of use, increases in use, and stigma associated with AOD use. This indicates that what is perceived as newsworthy, how it is discussed, and what images are portrayed can have positive or negative implications for AOD use in the community. Even in the technological age, media portrayals of AOD use are a primary source of information for the general community when they are seeking information and advice about AOD harms, treatment options, and risk reduction. The accumulation of evidence suggests that the media influence can have both positive and negative effects, according to the focus of the portrayal, the language used, and the scope of the report.

Limitations of the review

Several limitations of the current review should be mentioned. Firstly, studies on media advertising and AOD use were not included, for which a large body of research exists. This was beyond the scope of the current review. The restricted date range set for the review (2007-2018) opens it to a risk that it failed to include studies of relevance to the Evidence Check. Finally, the scope of this review reflects the content that was identified in the context of an Evidence Check and may have resulted in the omission of some other relevant studies.

A note on social media

Very little evidence was found on the impact of social media and online media portrayals of AOD use, nor the impact of such on attitudes and behaviours related to AOD use. This is a gap, given social media is one of the most pervasive forms of information provision and exposure currently available. A recent Deloitte study suggested that, as an example, news and social media are entwined, with 35% of survey respondents agreeing that over the next 3-5 years they will use social media to keep up-to-date with breaking news (Alcorn, Chang, & Harding, 2017), and this was consistent across all age groups. Indeed, commenting on news or special interest areas via social media is the most frequent social networking activity for Australians, with many indicating that what they see on social media shapes their views about the world (Alcorn et al., 2017). Most Australians understand that media reports of any kind have an agenda, and that conflicting opinions and viewpoints are canvassed via online and traditional media (ACMA, 2011). However, people remain concerned about how to navigate through the increasing appearance of 'fake news' stories online, the integration of news reports with advertising content online, and diversity of news and media sources now available to them (ACMA, 2011).

Recommendations

1. That updated media guidelines be produced for AOD related issues

Based on the Evidence Check, there is a strong need for updated media guidelines to be developed on the responsible reporting of AOD use to reduce stigma, reduce harms, and prevent or reduce AOD use. To extend the core principles of existing AOD guidelines for media professionals (Part III), the following are recommended as guiding principles for these guidelines:

- When reporting on increases in AOD use trends, include the prevalence of the ‘emerging’ drug of concern in the context of other AOD use. For example, when reporting on the ‘ice epidemic’, include a discussion of similar harms and the prevalence of alcohol use problems. The harms of one drug do not disappear with the emergence of a new drug on the market.
- Remember that the person at the centre of the story is somebody’s daughter/son, mother/father, or another important person. Be sensitive to the ways in which media reporting of AOD use can affect a person’s life.
- Suggest a shift in framing away from people with drug problems being treated as self-indulgent pleasure seekers who could get rid of their addiction if they wanted to, towards being people with a serious illness who need help.
- It is not prejudicial or stigmatising to describe someone who has broken the law - whether through possession of drugs or a crime committed to pay for drugs – as having done something wrong. But this is as far as the description needs to go.
- Avoid reporting stereotypical descriptions of AOD use or people using AOD, including stigmatising images (e.g., needles, people passed out, etc.). Instead, try to source key informants (e.g., researchers, clinicians, people with a lived experience, etc.). In doing so, try using anonymous sources (offer informants methods to disguise their identity), seek signed consent, and provide fair, sensitive, and accurate labels for all images. Understand that in some cases, a same-day comment may not be practical. Remember the impact that the story may have on the informant’s life.
- Avoid the use of stigmatising language, as per the UKDPC (2017) and GCDP (2017) guidelines.
- Increase the perceptions of media as credible sources of information by avoiding moral panic and exaggeration in reporting and focusing on adverse health and social consequences of AOD use.
- Remember there is important research emerging about the benefits of prevention, early intervention, and treatment/recovery from AOD use. The critical message for the general public is that effective help is available, and to seek help early. It is rarely too late to engage in treatment for AOD use. Effective elements of interventions to increase motivation to quit or modify AOD use (e.g. deploying discrepancies) can be equally effective when presented via the media.

- Understand that the way in which the media reports AOD use and describes people who are using AOD will have a direct impact on initiation to AOD use, relapse, help-seeking for AOD use, and the health and wellbeing of those directly and indirectly affected by AOD use. Media portrayals are critical in helping to shape public opinion about AOD use and people who use AOD. The media also helps to shape policy and funding for AOD use in Australia. There is such responsibility in reporting on AOD use, but such opportunity to make important changes in information, attitudes, and help-seeking for AOD use.
- Minimise using the word ‘epidemic’ when describing increases in the incidence and prevalence of drug use, to direct attention towards reducing problems associated with AOD use (Chitwood, Murphy, & Rosenbaum, 2009).
- Stories emphasizing links between AOD use and mental health problems, pill spiking, and negative health and social consequences are most appealing and influential to young people (C. Hughes et al., 2010).
- Avoid reporting drug names and details involved in overdose or drug-related deaths to minimise interest in those drugs.
- Avoid presenting AOD use in terms of normative behaviours as this is likely to lead to initiation of AOD use.
- It is acknowledged that the need to create and publish fast, real-time media content is a critical part of modern-day journalism (ACMA, 2011). Thus, any guidelines need to reflect this reality, and provide fast, real-time access to accurate and credible information and advice about AOD use in order to have an impact on reporting practices. Linking breaking news stories to ‘slower’, deeper, follow-up media content may be an approach worthy of exploring.

2. That an implementation plan be developed to encourage uptake of the AOD media guidelines

Of note, is that none of the guidelines identified in this Evidence Check, or recommendations for the core principles for media portrayals of AOD use have been properly tested to determine whether: (a) they have sufficient face validity with journalists and other media professionals in Australia, or (b) they can be implemented in Australian media settings as written.

This is a critical step in moving the field forward, given a study funded by the Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD) ,into news coverage on illicit drugs found that the Australian Press Council guidelines were not routinely known of or followed by journalists or other media professionals (Blood & McCallum, 2005). Thus, while guidelines must be updated and developed, on their own they are unlikely to result in a significant change in behaviour and reporting styles for AOD use.

It is recommended that the implementation plan include multiple pathways for the media to access up to date and credible evidence and information about AOD use. This could include online sources, engagement with AOD researchers and/or agencies, or a brokering-type service to link media professionals with credible experts (with and without a lived experience of AOD use) for expert

comment. Government-funded organisations with an AOD focus are suggested as a critical partner in this process.

3. That the implementation plan be evaluated to determine its impact on reporting practices and AOD-related stigma

No previous work has evaluated the impact of the implementation or uptake of media guidelines for AOD use in the general community. Thus, it is recommended that an evaluation project be undertaken alongside the implementation project to determine whether implementation of the guidelines by Australian media is associated with reductions in stigma associated with AOD use or people using AOD in the general community.

4. That a strategy for consumers of media be developed to facilitate fact checking of media reports on AOD use

In response to the fast-changing landscape of media reporting, it is recommended that further work is carried out to identify methods to assist Australian consumers of media in the general community to become more empowered in consuming information about AOD use through the media. The evidence suggests that interest in AOD use peaks following media portrayals and reports on AOD use, with online searches related to AOD increasing significantly. By capitalising on this interest, there is an opportunity ensure that high quality, accurate, and credible information is readily available to the general community following AOD-related media reports. This could include online resources to assist the general community in identifying 'fake news', to help them verify media reports of AOD use, and to encourage sharing of AOD-related information that is evidence-informed and accurate. This could also include strategies for media outlets to publish additional information regarding AOD use for the general community to access. This may go some way to counteract concerns about the proliferation of 'fake news' and also serve to raise the profile and access rates of trusted, credible media sources. There is evidence that this approach would be welcome in the community, not just in terms of the volume of Australians now accessing their news and information online, but with survey data indicating that 70% of Deloitte survey respondents using online news sources valuing the establishment of a 'quality' or 'authenticity' rating on news content to help them digest information about issues of public interest (Alcorn et al., 2017).

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APPENDIX A

Table 3: Studies describing the portrayal of AOD in the media

Author (date)	Title	Country	Paper Type	Findings
(2009)	A drug-induced low	UK	Editorial	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• About dismissal of UK government’s chief adviser on drug abuse, David Nutt.• Public perception is highly influenced by the way the media cover dramatic events such as drug related deaths.• The media have disproportionately highlighted the comparatively small number of deaths caused by drugs such as cocaine and MDMA compared with the far more numerous deaths caused by other substances, such as alcohol.
Ayers et al., (2012)	The haunting spectacle of crystal meth: A media-created mythology?	UK	Editorial	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alarmist media representations have initiated spontaneous, ill-advised policy reactions, with inevitable but detrimental consequences.• For the UK media, reporting of crystal methamphetamine was significantly disproportionate to its actual status as a social issue.

Azar et al., (2014)	'Something's brewing': The changing trends in alcohol coverage in Australian newspapers 2000-2011	Australia	Content analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examination of news coverage of alcohol-related issues in Australian newspaper articles (n= 4217) published from 2000 to 2011. • Most common themes were promotion (21%), drink-driving (16%) and restrictions/policy (16%). • Themes of restrictions/policy and responsible beverage services became more common over time. Promotion and business-related articles significantly declined over time. • The majority of news related articles disapproved of alcohol use. Disapproval increased over time while approval of alcohol use decreased. • Opinion pieces were predominantly approving of alcohol, but this decreased over time. • The presentation of alcohol use in Australian newspapers became more disapproving over time, which may suggest that harmful alcohol use has become less acceptable among the broader Australian community.
Belackova et al., (2011)	Selling by drugs': Content analysis of the coverage of illicit drugs in different news media types and formats	Czechoslovakia	Content analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Czech news sources there was a greater likelihood of TV and radio broadcasting supply reduction news. • Tabloid journals, the partisan press, and local newspapers featured crime-related drug coverage.
Bogren (2017)	'Alcohol short-circuits important part of the brain': Swedish newspaper representations of biomedical alcohol research	Sweden	Content analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media reporting of biomedical research findings regarding alcohol. • Discourse focuses on genetic factors related to alcohol problems, on the role of the brain and the reward system in addiction, and on medication for treating alcohol problems. • Metaphors of 'reconstruction' and 'reprogramming' of the reward system are used to describe how the brain's function is altered in addiction. • Metaphors of 'undeserved reward' and 'shortcuts' to pleasure are used to describe alcohol's effects on the brain.

Cobbina et al., (2008)	Race and class differences in print media portrayals of crack cocaine and methamphetamine	USA	Content analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discusses how the media creates and maintains "moral panic" around drugs. • Content analysis on 24 newspaper articles - 41 from The New York Times, 28 from the Chicago Tribune, 15 from The Washington Post, and 40 from the Los Angeles Times. • Both race and class played a role in shaping the media's depictions of crack cocaine and methamphetamine during their popularity. • Qualitative differences in media portrayal for both drugs. In most cases, crack is described as a problem primarily afflicting impoverished African American communities. • When journalists' identified white middle-class or affluent people who use crack purchasing crack, they are often profiled as victims of the drug instead of criminals. • Print media representation of crack cocaine did affect official response. • Articles on crack were two times more likely than methamphetamine articles to express the need for harsher crime control policies.
Fogarty et al., (2012)	Australian television news coverage of alcohol, health and related policies, 2005 to 2010: implications for alcohol policy advocates	Australia	Content analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This paper provides Australian data on television news reportage of alcohol, with emphases on (i) whether health effects of alcohol consumption are mentioned; (ii) whether alcohol-control policies are discussed in the news; and (iii) the type of news-actors featured in health-related alcohol stories. • Examination of all 612 alcohol stories archived by the Australian Health News Research Collaboration (2005-2010) from free to air television. • Problems related to alcohol were well-established foci of news attention and reportage and covered a broad spectrum of issues related to public health goals, yet less coverage centred on long-term health consequences or effective policy solutions.

Haines- Saah et al., (2014)	The privileged normalization of marijuana use - an analysis of Canadian newspaper reporting, 1997-2007	Canada	Content analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predominant themes within mainstream media reporting of marijuana use in Canada (1997 and 2007). • Barriers to the provision of balanced, meaningful, relevant reporting about marijuana use because Canadian newspaper stories reflect a somewhat moralistic 'us and them' tone, with a tendency to stigmatize everyday people (e.g. those without elite privilege) who use marijuana.
Hellman (2015)	What causes addiction problems? Environmental, biological and constitutional explanations in press portrayals from four European welfare societies	Finland, Italy, Netherlands Poland	Content analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental explanations, which represented the broadest category were the most common across all countries. • A general worry over societal change is tied into the explanations of accumulating addiction problems and underpins the press reporting in all countries. • In Italy the environmental conditions were typically attached to family relations. • In the Dutch reporting they were depicted on the meso level: living conditions, user contexts and neighbourhoods. • In the Polish and the Finnish reporting more large scale conceptualizations of contextual factors, in terms of societal arrangements and planning, were interwoven in the explanatory conditions. • A general feature in the journalism from all countries was a reference to coping in a fast stressful and competitive society. There was also an obvious absence of explanations pertaining to a general availability and accessibility of substances and opportunities to perform the behaviour.

Horyniak (2016)	News Media Reporting on Substance Use Among People of African Ethnicity in Three Australian States, 2003-2013	Australia	Systematic search and content analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examined media presentation of substance abuse among African migrant communities in Australia. The most often identified substance was alcohol (68% of articles). Majority of articles described specific incidents (81%) e.g. abuse (43% of articles). Articles prioritised a legal and moral discourse rather than a health discourse, and constructed African communities as unaligned with Australian values.
Keary (2017)	The Least of These: How Eduardo Diaz's Image of Drug Users in Pakistan Offers an Alternate Media Representation of Addiction	Pakistan	Semiotic analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compares two images about drug use that were published in Daily Mail and Telegraph. Proposes that typical news photographs of drug users promote an inaccurate and destructive media discourse on drug use. The dominant media drug discourse described as moral panic. Conscious production and publication of images that challenge or offer alternatives to the dominant view (or moral panic) could promote a more critical and realistic discourse on drugs and drug users.
La Vail (2012)	Is media framing of coverage of prescription drug abuse a reflection of cultural diffusion?	USA	Content analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examined how prescription opioid abuse was framed over time in Internet and broadcast news coverage from 1997 to 2008. Prescription opioid abuse is very narrowly framed as a health issue, with fewer indicators that might suggest that it is a social, legal, political, or economic issue. Prescription opioids are treated as innovations with attributes that set them apart from illicit drugs Portrayal of substance users as either older males seeking pain relief or younger females seeking a high is distortive of the actual issue and does not accurately reflect drug users in general. Health, legal, and political frames were used more frequently over time, while there was no significant relationship between the year of publication and the economic, social, or relative advantage frames.

Lee et al., (2016)	From scientific article to press release to media coverage: advocating alcohol abstinence and democratising risk in a story about alcohol and pregnancy	USA	Content analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissects the media reporting of a story about drinking by pregnant women in the light of a recent research study on same. • Three dominant themes identified: 1) democratised messages about harm to children caused by any drinking in pregnancy, 2) warnings to all women about the need to abstain, and 3) claims about research focused on genes providing new evidence. • It was claimed that these messages were based on what had emerged from new research. While there were some alternative assessments offered of what ‘research shows’, these were few in number, and were mostly restricted to Blogs, not mainstream media reporting • What the media reported was encouraged by the research group's press release highlighting the responsibility of researchers to give balanced press releases. • This work has demonstrated how researchers can shape risk narratives, by publicly favouring debatable interpretations and implications of their findings, and communicating through press releases that report some key findings but omit others.
Mastroianni (2008)	Newsmaking on Drugs: A Qualitative Study with Journalism Professionals	Brazil	Qualitative analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explored the news making process regarding drugs from the vantage point of Brazilian journalism professionals. • Qualitative, semi-structured interviews were conducted among an intentional sample of 22 professionals who write news stories and articles about drugs in nationwide news media. • Illegality and crime were the main factors leading to the production of stories and articles. • By instilling fear among readers, newspapers and magazines tend to increase their audiences and/or sales. • The journalists themselves had negative views of journalistic coverage and the main problems cited include lack of specialised personnel, time and knowledge, and the need for specialised guidelines. • They note that journalism tends to favour alarmist news, and by favouring links to crime and violence it doesn't allow an appreciation of wider influences like socio-economic factors.

<p>McGinty et al., (2016)</p>	<p>The emerging public discourse on state legalization of marijuana for recreational use in the US: Analysis of news media coverage, 2010–2014</p>	<p>USA</p>	<p>Content analysis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysed news stories about recreational marijuana policy published/aired by 42 high circulation/viewership national, regional, and local news outlets (380 print news stories) and television news sources during 2010–2014, in DC where recreational marijuana use was legalized during the study period. • The volume of news media coverage about recreational marijuana policy was heavily concentrated around state legalization efforts. • The most frequently occurring pro-legalization arguments posited that legalizing marijuana for recreational use by adults would reduce criminal justice system involvement and costs (mentioned in 20% of all news stories); increase tax revenue (19%); reduce the power of criminal drug syndicates (15%); help reverse the failure of current drug policy in the United States (13%); and increase business revenue (11%).
<p>McLean (2017)</p>	<p>From “Junkies” to “Soccer Moms”: Newspaper Representations of Overdose, 1988–2014</p>	<p>USA</p>	<p>Qualitative content analysis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative content analysis of 178 newspaper articles reporting on three temporally distinct surges in heroin overdose in western Pennsylvania, with the city of Pittsburgh and surrounding Allegheny County as their epicentre. • Involving a significant spike in deaths over a relatively brief period, each “outbreak” was accompanied by a corresponding swell in media coverage, driven by both the human tragedy of lost lives and the unsolved mystery of the “killer drugs.” • Demonstrated how mainstream representation of opioid addiction and accidental drug overdose has perceptibly shifted alongside the class, race, and residence of users and victims.
<p>Nakash et al., (2016)</p>	<p>The association between religiosity and alcohol use: the mediating role of meaning in life and media exposure</p>	<p>Israel</p>	<p>Cross sectional data analysis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examined whether meaning in life and exposure to media mediate the association between religiosity and alcohol use among members of the Jewish orthodox community in Israel. 110 men participated who consider themselves orthodox (self-report). • Findings show that religiosity is negatively associated with alcohol consumption and craving, such that orthodox young adults reported consuming and craving significantly less alcohol compared to their secular counterparts. • Search for meaning in life and media exposure mediate the relationship between religiosity and alcohol craving. • Meaning in life also has an indirect effect on alcohol use, through media exposure.

Netherland (2016)	The War on Drugs That Wasn't: Wasted Whiteness, "Dirty Doctors," and Race in Media Coverage of Prescription Opioid Misuse	USA	Content analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A content analysis of 100 popular press articles from 2001 and 2011 in which half describe heroin users and half describe prescription opioid users revealed a consistent contrast between criminalised urban black and Latino heroin injectors with sympathetic portrayals of suburban white prescription opioid users. • The disparate treatment of white drug use in the media provides an opening to expose the political and cultural economy of race and drugs in order to leverage a more equitable response both at the levels of representation and policy for all people who use drugs. The media has long played a central role in fomenting drug scares and perpetuating racist stereotypes and the authors argue that journalists must do better at noticing the racism inherent in their coverage of the opioid epidemic and becoming more conscious of implicit bias in their reporting. They can start by making sure that their portrayals of people who use drugs are fair and equitable across race and class.
Nicholls (2010)	UK news reporting of alcohol: An analysis of television and newspaper coverage.	UK	Content analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified patterns in the representation of alcohol-related stories in the UK news media • Analysis of seven daily newspapers and four television news programmes over two sample periods: 20 December 2008–2 January 2009 and 15–22 March 2009. • News reporting strongly emphasises negative outcomes, especially violence, drink-driving and long-term health impacts. • Reports of celebrity drinking are commonplace. • Public health perspectives play a central role in the framing of alcohol-related stories. • There is a clear gender divide: male drinking is associated with violence, while female drinking is associated with simply appearing drunk. • Compared to previous studies, the 'normalization' of drinking in news reporting has declined. • Public health advocates have successfully established themselves as key sources for alcohol stories. However, there remains no consensus on public health policy initiatives.

Orsini (2017)	Frame Analysis of Drug Narratives in Network News Coverage	USA	Content analysis & hierarchical cluster analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examined the coverage of heroin and cocaine in televised evening news reports. • Media coverage of heroin and cocaine remained relatively homogeneous from the year 2000 to 2015, with drugs frequently discussed in contexts of crime, deviance, and tragedy. • The most salient features of drug-related stories during this period included violence, crime, addiction, and health risks, while the leading policy choices remained traditional prohibition-oriented approaches. • The existence of the four frames identified in this study illustrated the absence of public health and harm reduction narratives, as well as those related to decriminalisation or legalisation of illicit substances and the normalization of drug use.
Paimre (2011)	Media generated news waves - catalysts for discursive change: The case study on drug issues in Estonian print media	Estonia	Content and discourse analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intensive media reporting of the high profile arrest of Estonian drug traffickers in Thailand, initially emotively and subjectively, raised public awareness and shaped the social drug discourse in Estonia. • Examined media text from 1993 to 2005. • The representation of drug issues changed in the 1990s whereby addiction to illegal drugs was viewed as a marginal problem but wasn't generally broadcast for public awareness. • Today the issue of drugs in Estonia is mainly associated with the crime and police discourse common in other countries. • After the Thai drug trafficking case the presentation of drug-related issues in the media increased considerably, and drug trafficking and crime discourses converged in the media.
Schwartz (2010)	Coverage of Methamphetamine in GLBT Newspapers	USA	Content analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examined the framing of methamphetamine in nine gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) newspapers between 2004 and 2007, to aid health communicators and public health personnel in designing anti-methamphetamine campaigns targeted at gay communities. • Methamphetamine was framed as a "gay problem," sexual health and solutions frames were prevalent, and GLBT newspapers covered methamphetamine in a way that is similar to how they covered AIDS in the 1980s.

Simon (2014)	Disciplining Drunken Mothers: Media Representations of Women's Use of Alcohol	USA	Discussion paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Themes of women's psychological health have become newsworthy in today's media environment in which healthy mothers are pitted against unhealthy mothers in the fight over the definition of perfect mother. • Discussed the "war" around mothers drinking alcohol while also "being a mom." • Examined news reports on this issue from NBC's The Today Show and ABC's Good Morning America. • These morning news programs exploit women's drinking habits by framing women's drinking within the realism of a news broadcast and suggest that their depictions of mothers represent mothers as one, homogenous group. The way in which drinking mothers are portrayed in the news suggests that there is a crisis in the US wherein children are consistently put in danger by their drunken mothers.
Slater et al., (2012)	Increasing Support for Alcohol-Control Enforcement Through News Coverage of Alcohols Role in Injuries and Crime.	USA	Between subjects experimental design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior research has shown that the proportion of news stories about violent crimes, car crashes, and other unintended injuries that mention the possible contributing role of alcohol is far lower than the actual proportion of alcohol-related crimes and unintended injuries. • Sixty randomly selected local newspaper stories on violent crime, motor vehicle crashes, and other unintended injuries were manipulated into versions including or not including alcohol as a causative factor. • Mention of alcohol in news stories increased support for enforcement of alcohol-control laws. • Efforts to increase mention of alcohol as a causative factor in news reports of violent crime and unintended injury have the potential to increase public support for alcohol-control policies.

Smith (2009)	Special issue: The message and the media: Media coverage of celebrity dui: Teachable moments or problematic social modeling	USA	Qualitative analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alcohol in the media influences norms around use, particularly for young people. • Examined whether media reporting of celebrity arrests for drinking and driving (DUI) serve as teachable moments or problematic social modelling for young women. Included eight news media sources that were selected to provide variety in terms of media type, focus and targeted audience (150 print and 16 TV news stories). • Coverage of celebrity drinking and driving was dominated by a law and order frame, with little evidence of any presentation of ‘solutions’ for drinking and driving. • ‘Solutions’ were focused almost entirely on ‘fixing’ the individual celebrities’ problematic alcohol use. • Discussions of consequences of drinking and driving were largely limited to the legal and career implications for celebrities. • The use of publicity images of celebrities that have nothing to do with the DUI may serve to glamorise drinking and driving. • Little evidence of any prevention messaging. Little discussion of personal or societal responsibility in the coverage beyond vague discussions of celebrity engagement in addiction treatment or legally mandated community service. • Findings resonate with other research on entertainment media that has argued that the negative consequences of drinking are rarely portrayed (Connolly et al., 1994). • These findings are consistent with the view proposed by Myhre et al. (2002) who argue that ‘from a public health standpoint, it is of concern that many news stories emphasize the episodic nature of the events rather than discussing root social causes or appropriate preventive action.
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Smith (2014)	Alcohol Related Player Behavioural Transgressions: Incidences, Fan Media Responses and a Harm Reduction Alternative.	Australia	Netnography and content analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examines fans' social media responses to media reporting alcohol transgressions from Australian rugby league and AFL sport stars over the period of 33 months. Many fans become more incensed by a club or league's response than they do by the original alcohol-related transgression.
Springer (2010)	The Race and Class Privilege of Motherhood: The New York Times Presentations of Pregnant Drug-Using Women	USA	Comparative discourse analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessed whether media coverage of pregnant drug-using women is proportional to the documented adverse consequences of specific drugs or, rather, whether media coverage is higher and more negative for poor and minority pregnant women regardless of the degree of adverse health consequences associated with the specific drug used. Media focus on these women had little to do with helping children who might be harmed by drug use during pregnancy. Instead, the racialisation and class typing of pregnant drug-using women served to garner support for characterizing poor and minority women as illegitimate mothers.

Swalve
(2016)

Framing the
danger of designer
drugs: Mass
media, bath salts,
and the "Miami
Zombie Attack"

USA

Content
analysis

- Examined the media coverage of “designer drugs,” using coverage of a highly publicized attack in Miami as a case study (May to June 2012).
 - Broadcast news transcripts were analysed to both identify themes in coverage of this attack and contextualise this reporting in the clinical literature on bath salts, the drug implicated in the attack.
 - Major emergent themes: (1) vivid and sensational descriptions of the attack and of the effects of the drug, (2) discussion of bath salts use as an “epidemic,” (3) appeals to tighten legislation related to bath salts, and (4) silence on issues related to mental health.
 - The focus on ease of accessibility, the danger to children, and the links to various “at-risk” groups, such as teenagers or soldiers, drew upon existing media tropes and cultural assumptions surrounding drug use.
 - The description of bath salts present in these broadcast media reports was very different from the scientific literature on the topic.
 - The primary symptoms mentioned in the transcripts included an increase in aggressive behavior, “super strength,” and vivid hallucinations that could cause psychosis which are very different from the increase in talkativeness, empathy, energy, and euphoria that characterize the clinical literature on the effects of bath salts.
 - The first theme, the vivid and sensational language used to describe the attack (emphasized by the video footage), underlined that reporting on this attack did not take into account key sources of information such as clinical literature on bath salts.
 - Importantly, there was no discussion of other factors (such as mental health problems, other drug use, or other social and environmental issues) that also shape drug effects.
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Taylor (2008)	Outside the Outsiders: Media's Representation of Drug Use.	UK	Discussion paper and literature review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlights the key themes within the media's representation and reporting of drug use and drug related crime. • Focus on how the media represent illicit material and the users and their casual links with illegal behaviour. • Proposes that news media and government belief mirror each other and adapted a similar if not same stance with it being not only seriously problematic and dangerous it can cause further criminality. • Describes media as biased and disproportionate and focuses on stereotypes of drug users and drug offenders, at the expense of a much wider and more complex discussion to the detriment of a holistic drugs discourse. • The ramifications of such representations are that users of heroin and crack cocaine are thought of as risk-bearing 'outsiders' and are actively excluded from society.
Tiger (2015)	Celebrity gossip blogs and the interactive construction of addiction	USA	Discussion paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebrity gossip blogs, some with millions of readers, are important sites for the interactive construction of addiction. • The highly editorial nature of these blogs combined with their low bar to participation make them ideal sites to study how bloggers and readers interpret celebrity drug use. • Discusses case study of gossip blogger Perez Hilton's coverage of actress Lindsay Lohan's legal troubles, and reader responses to these stories. • Interactive discussion of celebrity reinforces dominant constructions of habitual drug use as a form of badness and sickness best treated with jail and coerced treatment. • In this case study, three key events were covered 1) Lohan's sentencing to jail and coerced drug treatment, for a probation violation, provided a view of how bloggers and readers construct the problem of addiction and the institutional sites that should manage drug users; 2) Lohan's mandated SCRAM use (a transdermal alcohol-monitoring anklet), served to push readers to think about the community surveillance of drug users; 3) Lohan's probation revocation after she tested positive for cocaine use and she discussed her 'disease' on her Twitter site, prompted readers to debate the meaning of addiction.

Torrönen (2015)	<p>“Disease” of the Nation, Family and Individual: Three Moral Discourses of Alcohol Problems in Finnish Women's Magazines from the 1960s to the 2000s</p>	Finland	Content analysis and framing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Samples reporting of alcohol use in women’s magazines in the years 1968, 1976, 1984, 1992, 2000 and 2008 in parallel with the closing gender gap in alcohol use. • A family centred framing dominated the constructions of alcohol problem: fathers’ and husbands’ alcoholism appeared as a main object of regulation in all decades under study, while mothers’ and wives’ alcoholism was much less prevalent. • About half of the texts addressed women in the subject positions of wives and mothers, who are responsible for acting to combat alcoholism by ensuring appropriate upbringing, relationships and boundaries among their family members and, if needed, by seeking help from the public sector, peers and intimates.
Usher et al., (2015)	Is there an Ice Epidemic in Australia	Australia	Editorial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media reports related to ‘ice’ continue to occur regularly on television and in the press with emphasis on issues such as ease of access to the drug, reduced costs to service men and women e.g. police, ambulance etc., and the impact it has on these services particularly homicides and vehicle crashes. • Although use of methamphetamines has remained stable at 2% of the Australian population from 2010 to 2013, media sensationalism may be shaping public perceptions and anxieties about the scope and magnitude of the problem. • While there is a need for more cautious/accurate use of the terms ‘ice’ and ‘epidemic’, particularly by media and politicians, there is no doubt that the use of crystal methamphetamine is increasing and is highly problematic across the domains of health and law enforcement.

Hughes
(2011)

How do Australian
news media
depict illicit drug
issues? An analysis
of print media
reporting across
and between illicit
drugs, 2003–2008

Australia

Retrospective
content
analysis of
Australian
print media

- Sample comprised of 11 newspapers over the period 2003–2008
- Examined articles that contained one or more mention of five different drugs (or derivatives): cannabis, amphetamines, ecstasy, cocaine and heroin.
- Sub-sample of 4397 articles was selected for media content analysis (with 2045 selected for full content analysis) and a large number of text elements coded for each.
- Key themes in media portrayals were of law enforcement or criminal justice action (55%) - most articles were reported in a neutral manner, in the absence of crisis framings.
- Portrayals differed between drugs, with some containing more narrow frames and more explicit moral evaluations than others.
- When all criminal justice and law enforcement topics are grouped together (including criminal justice action, drug related crime and law enforcement policy commentary), they accounted for over two-thirds of the sample (69.8%).
- In contrast, only 4.8% of articles denoted harms and 7.4% research/reports of drug market changes. Celebrity or elite drug use was the third most popular topic, accounting for 8.6%.
- 40.1% of the consequences portrayed relate to non-legal issues. This means that even when criminal justice issues are “what make drugs news”, impacts of drug use on educational and employment prospects, stigma/reputation, mental health and public amenity are often included as part of the framing of the story.
- Media frames can differ in important ways between drugs, giving rise to very real differences in the likelihood of particular topics, consequences or value dimensions emerging.
- Articles depicting amphetamines appear to have the most explicit and pejorative value dimensions, with almost half portraying a “bad” moral evaluation.
- At the other end of the spectrum was cocaine, with predominantly neutral tones and neutral moral evaluations.
- Heroin was by far the most narrowly framed drug, being reported almost exclusively as a criminal justice issue and emphasising legal problems with drug use.
- The broadest coverage of topics and consequences was discussed in relation to mixed drugs (where more than one drug type was discussed with equal weight).

APPENDIX B

Table 5: Impact of media reporting on AOD use and related outcomes

Author (date)	Title	Country	Paper Type	Findings
(2011)	Drugs in the Media: Effects and Side Effects of Mass Communication about Drugs	USA	Literature review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US media, censorship and recent changes as well as the history of media portrayals. • Talks about social learning theory and modelling and theories about the way in which media portrayals could impact real life behaviour. • Disease model implicated in changing public perception of drug user from “unfortunate but fairly normal” in nineteenth century, into “crazed dope fiend” of the twentieth. • Social learning theory used to explain the process by which the media portrayal of drug use implants lessons directly and influences audience members who then influence others. • Exposes the possibility that any media portrayals of drug use may entice potential users.
2007	Survey Says	USA	Third party report of research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sales of red wine surged after two positive media reports on studies of health impacts of red wine in Nov 2006 by Harvard Medical School and National Institute on Aging.
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2013)	Teens and Substance Use	USA	Third party report of survey research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer teens are getting messages about the risks of drug use from the media than 10 years ago. • The proportion of teens reporting getting drug or alcohol use prevention information from the media decreased from about 83% in 2002 to about 75% in 2011. • Fewer teens are reporting that they perceive marijuana use as risky, with 54.6% of teens reporting in 2007 they perceived smoking marijuana once or twice a week as risky, compared with 44.8% in 2011.

Anderson et al., (2009)	Impact of Alcohol Advertising and Media Exposure on Adolescent Alcohol Use: A Systematic Review of Longitudinal Studies	The Netherlands	Systematic review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longitudinal studies consistently suggest that exposure to media and commercial communications on alcohol is associated with the likelihood that adolescents will start to drink alcohol, and with increased drinking amongst baseline drinkers. • Based on the strength of this association, the consistency of findings across numerous observational studies, temporality of exposure and drinking behaviours observed, dose-response relationships, as well as the theoretical plausibility regarding the impact of media exposure and commercial communications, authors conclude that alcohol advertising and promotion increases the likelihood that adolescents will start to use alcohol, and to drink more if they are already using alcohol.
Ayers et al., (2012)	Do Media Messages Change People's Risk Perceptions for Binge Drinking?	UK	Experimental design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigated the effect of a media health message of drinking which has been presented on national television on perception of risk (comparative optimism). • The health message influence on risk perception on the anti-binge drinking message had the desired effect. For three out of four behaviours (accident, unprotected sex and car accident) the experimental groups (watching the ad or imagining yourself in the ad) exhibited significantly less comparative optimism than controls, i.e. they rated themselves as more at risk. • For unprotected sex (both imagine and watch conditions) and accident (imagine condition) participants were totally de-biased.
Bas & Grabe (2015)	Emotion-provoking personalization of news: Informing citizens and closing the knowledge gap	USA	Experimental design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional personalization of news (about topics including lethality of legal drugs) increased encoding, storage, and retrieval of news information for citizens positioned at both higher and lower educational segments of society. • The potency of this effect varied across the two education groups, with the lower education group generally benefiting more from emotional personalization than the high educated group. • Specifically, the information acquisition gap between these two segments of the population remained significant for both versions of news stories, but the size of this variance narrowed for emotionally personalized stories. • These findings confirm that educational levels drive information acquisition gaps.

Beaudreault (2010)	Methamphetamine in the United States: Perceptions and educational programming needs in extension education	USA	Dissertation Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveyed knowledge and perceptions of methamphetamine among Educational Extension Directors (EDs). • EDs learned the most methamphetamine information from the news (44%). • Seventy-nine percent reported they had read or watched local news coverage on a methamphetamine lab seizure. • Eighty-five percent of EDs agreed that the media was their primary source of methamphetamine information and 93% possessed inaccurate methamphetamine use perceptions; therefore, supporting the Media Dependency and Moral Panic theories.
Borwein et al., (2013)	Prescribing practices amid the OxyContin crisis: Examining the effect of print media coverage on opioid prescribing among physicians	Canada	Interrupted time-series design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examined whether media coverage of oxycodone extended release in North American newspapers has led to changes in prescribing of the drug in Nova Scotia, Canada. • The outcome measures were, for each physician, the monthly proportions of all opioids prescribed and the proportion of strong opioids prescribed that were for oxycodone extended release. The exposure of interest was media attention defined as the number of articles published each month in 27 North American newspapers. • Variations in media effects by provider characteristics (specialty, prescribing volume, and region) were assessed. • Within-provider changes in the prescribing of oxycodone extended release in Nova Scotia were observed, and they followed changes in media coverage. • Oxycodone extended release prescribing rose steadily prior to receiving media attention. • Following peak media attention in the United States, the prescribing of oxycodone extended release slowed. • Following peak coverage in Canadian newspapers, the prescribing of oxycodone extended release declined. • These patterns were observed across prescriber specialties and by prescriber volume, though the magnitude of change in prescribing varied.
Branstetter et al., (2015)	Knowledge and perceptions of	USA	Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants reported that pro-tobacco ads and favourable messages were received through the internet, direct mail, convenience stores, billboards, movies, and other sources.

	tobacco-related media in rural Appalachia			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-tobacco messages were identified primarily from television and magazines. In general, participants concluded that quitting was a matter of choice and was not influenced by pro- or anti-tobacco media. • These results indicate that both pro- and anti-tobacco messages from a variety of sources are highly recognized and remembered in detail in Appalachia, but the effectiveness of anti-tobacco messages is questionable within this group. • Without exception, group members reported that no media messages – either pro- or anti-tobacco – had any meaningful impact on their current behaviour. • Group members recognised that media messages influenced their behaviour at the time they were first starting to smoke.
Bright et al., (2013)	Kronic hysteria: Exploring the intersection between Australian synthetic cannabis legislation, the media, and drug-related harm	Australia	Content analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between April and June 2011, mentions of Kronic in the media and Google searches for the term Kronic increased. • These stories were framed within dominant discourses that served to construct synthetic cannabis as pathogenic and created a ‘moral panic’. Subsequently Australian state and federal governments banned individual synthetic cannabinoid agonists. Manufacturers then released new synthetic blends that they claimed contained new unscheduled chemicals. • Policies implemented within in the context of ‘moral panic’, can result in increased awareness of the banned product and the use of new yet-to-be-scheduled drugs with unknown potential for harm.
Burzyńska et al., (2015)	Television as a source of information on health and illness - review of benefits and problems	Poland	Critical review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The presence of stimulants such as cigarettes and alcohol in television messages leads to increased initiation of use.

Chalmers., (2016)	The stigmatisation of 'ice' and under-reporting of meth/amphetamine use in general population surveys: A case study from Australia	Australia	Case study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examined whether rapid increases in community concern about meth/amphetamine concurrent with increased stigmatising media reporting about meth/amphetamine “epidemics” are associated with increased under-reporting of its use in population surveys between 2001 and 2013. • Analysis of NDSHS data showed significant increases in community concern about meth/amphetamine between 2004 and 2007, and 2010 and 2013 in all birth cohorts and age groups. • In both periods self-reported lifetime use of meth/amphetamine fell in many birth cohorts. The falls were only statistically significant in the first period, for birth cohorts from 1961–1963 to 1973–1975. Increases in concern were specific to meth/amphetamine. • Substantial and rapid increase in the number of newspaper reports about meth/amphetamine in both periods, particularly reports including the term ‘epidemic’ were identified. • Rapid increases in the media reporting stigmatising a drug (through its construction as an ‘epidemic’) accompanying increased general public concerns about the drug may increase the tendency to under-report lifetime use and may make it difficult to rely upon household surveys to observe trends in patterns of use.
Dal Cin et al., (2008)	Exposure to alcohol use in movies: Future directions	USA	Commentary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examines the difference in presentation and impact of alcohol use in movies and advertising. • There are several potential differences, but the most straightforward may be the viewer’s awareness of persuasive intent on the part of the communicator. An alcohol advertisement is understood as such and may be scrutinised by the viewer however the same scrutiny may not be applied to a depiction of alcohol use in a film. • Story-based messages may be even more powerful than traditional advertising.
Critchlow et al., (2016)	Awareness of, and participation with, digital alcohol marketing, and the association with frequency of high	UK		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examined the role of alcohol marketing on social media. • Digital marketing was more successful than traditional in reaching young adults, and had a stronger association with increased frequency of Heavy Episodic Drinking. • Highlights the dynamic nature of marketing communications and the need for further research to fully understand young people’s experience with digital marketing.

episodic
drinking
among young
adults

Dasgupta (2009)	Breaking the news or fueling the epidemic? Temporal association between news media report volume and opioid-related mortality	USA	Ecological time series analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Compared a monthly time series of unintentional poisoning deaths involving short-acting prescription opioid substances, from 1999 to 2005 using multiple cause-of-death data, to monthly counts of English-language news articles mentioning generic and branded names of prescription opioids obtained from Google News Archives from 1999 to 2005.• Estimated the association between media volume and mortality rates by time-lagged regression analyses.• There were 24,272 articles and 30,916 deaths involving prescription opioids during the seven-year study period.• Nationally, the number of articles mentioning prescription opioids increased dramatically starting in early 2001, following prominent coverage about the nonmedical use of OxyContin.• A significant association between news reports and deaths was found, with media reporting preceding fatal opioid poisonings by two to six months and explaining 88% of the variation in mortality.
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Fogarty et al., (2013)	“Like Throwing a Bowling Ball at a Battle Ship” Audience Responses to Australian News Stories about Alcohol Pricing and Promotion Policies: A Qualitative	Australia	Content analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An analysis of all Sydney television news stories about alcohol between 2005 and 2010 shows that news paints a substantial picture of the ‘problem’ of alcohol and attendant health effects, but that reportage of alcohol-control policies was scant and unaligned with identified priorities.• Examined audience understandings of news broadcasts about alcohol taxation and advertising policies.• Dominant messages about alcohol-related harm identified in news media are generally reflected in audience discussions, where people readily report understanding the ‘alcohol problem’, yet are less clear about the role for policy solutions.• News coverage of alcohol stories has resulted in strong audience understanding of alcohol-related problems. However, the news framing of alcohol policy solutions has not always provided a clear cut-through message that audiences can understand, despite being supportive of policies.
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	Focus Group Study			
Forsyth (2012)	Virtually a drug scare: Mephedrone and the impact of the internet on drug news transmission	UK	Content analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This study investigated whether news reports attributing harm to mephedrone (e.g. deaths) precipitated increases in web-searches for the drug (e.g. where to buy it). • Google data supported the hypothesis that reports of deaths caused by a drug increases interest in buying that drug.
Goodall et al., (2013)	Fear and Anger Responses to Local News Coverage of Alcohol-Related Crimes, Accidents, and Injuries: Explaining News Effects on Policy Support Using a Representative Sample of Messages and People	USA	Experimental design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examined the impact of inclusion of alcohol as a causal factor in media stories, identifying its effect on anger and fear, and through these emotions, its impact on alcohol-control public policy support. • Stories were manipulated to mention or not mention the role of alcohol. Anger elicited by stories increased blame of individuals, whereas fear increased consideration of contributing societal factors. • Mention of alcohol increased likelihood of different emotional responses dominating. Greater anger when alcohol was mentioned and greater fear when not mentioned.

Lancaster (2012)	News media consumption among young Australians: Patterns of use and attitudes towards media reporting	Australia	Cross-sectional survey data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online survey of 2296 Australians aged 16–24. • Measured patterns of news media consumption and how that content is perceived by youth audiences, especially in relation to issues including perceptions of media reporting on illicit drugs. • 66.4% - 86.5% reported at least weekly contact with television news, online news, radio news and/or print newspapers. • 36.2% saw media as a good source of information on illicit drugs. • 59% couldn't trust journalists to tell the truth about illicit drugs. • 58% thought that news media tend to exaggerate the dangers of illicit drugs. • 47.3% reported that media affected their perceptions of illicit drugs and to a lesser extent those of their peers (39.5%). • 70.4% saw media as influencing government policy on illicit drugs. • Males were more likely to report that media exaggerated the dangers of drugs (72.6% compared with 50.9% of females) and that they did not trust journalists to tell the truth about drug issues (69.1% compared with 54.1% of females). • Males were much less likely to report they were influenced by media (40.0% compared with 50.8% of females), but more likely to say their peers were influenced (43.8% compared with 37.4% of females).
Lee et al., (2009)	Media Influences on Mexican-Heritage Youth Alcohol Use: Moderating Role of Media Language Preference and Parent-Child Communication about Alcohol Use	USA	Cross sectional data analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using cross-sectional data (N=1,243), the present study examined the hypothesis that social cognitive processes mediated the relationship between media exposure and Mexican-heritage youth alcohol use. • Positive alcohol expectancies and perceived peer norms fully mediated media influence on adolescents' alcohol use intentions and recent frequencies. • Media exposure elevated the perceptions of peer norm and these beliefs, in turn, led to greater alcohol use intentions and behaviour.

Miller (2007)	Media reports of heroin overdose spates: Public Health Messages, Moral Panics, or Risk Advertisements	Australia	Cross sectional data analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examines the public health utility of media messages concerning heroin overdose clusters. Sixty heroin users were interviewed over a six-week period in April/May 2000 at two needle and syringe programme (NSP) sites in Geelong, Australia. The median number of lifetime overdoses was three and ranged between one and 15 prior overdoses. Less than one in 10 interviewees had personally been involved in a spate of overdoses and no interviewees reported using less drugs or taking more precautions because of the messages. In relation to the issue of how users reacted to spates of overdoses, responses could be grouped into two major categories: (1) interviewees did not believe that spates of overdoses are caused by changes in purity or adulterants, and (2) when an interviewee heard of a spate of overdoses, he/she would try to gain access to the drugs in question. The media reports of spates of overdoses reported on in this paper can be seen to be both genuine attempts to inform IDUs as well as moral panics, whereby genuine concerns of health officials are used by media sources to create a panic situation, but also act to focus responsibility on the individual and further problematize heroin use and heroin users
Nunez-Smith et al., (2010)	Media exposure and tobacco, illicit drugs and alcohol use among children and adolescents: A systematic review.	USA	Systematic review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of 42 quantitative studies on the relationship between media exposure and tobacco, illicit drug, and alcohol use among children and adolescents. 83% of studies reported that media was associated with increased risk of smoking initiation, use of illicit drugs, and alcohol consumption. 95% found a statistically significant association between increased media exposure and negative outcomes. With evidence being strongest for links between tobacco and alcohol exposure. 83% of all of the studies concluded that increased media exposure was significantly associated with a negative behavioural outcome, e.g., smoking initiation, use of illicit drugs, and alcohol consumption, among children and adolescents. <p>Slightly greater than 70% of the studies evaluated exposure to specific media content such as television or film scenes with smoking or preferred types of musical genres; 19 of these 20 studies found that exposure to specific media content was significantly associated with negative behaviour outcomes.</p>

Omori (2013)	Moral Panics and morality policy: The impact of media, political ideology, drug use, and manufacturing on methamphetamine legislation in the United States	USA	Longitudinal data analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used a number of publicly available sources to obtain longitudinal, state-level data on methamphetamine legislation, news coverage, political ideology, methamphetamine use and manufacturing, and demographic characteristics for the years 2000-2007. • Dependent variables considered the themes of legislation passed at the state level during 2000-2007. • Themes of legislation were identified: pharmacy precursor regulations, precursor sentencing, manufacturing or trafficking, possession, research/task force, prevention or treatment, law enforcement, environmental clean-up, and child protection. • The study examined political, social, and media-related predictors on legislation passed during this time period. Specifically, the media’s focus on methamphetamine during this time period was measured as a rate of the number of times “methamphetamine” or “meth” appeared in local newspaper articles per newspaper. • Logistic regression largely supported the moral panic literature by finding media’s influence and methamphetamine manufacturing on legislation. • Findings also suggest that law enforcement agencies participate in constructing the drug problem, which then drives legislation. • There is less support for treatment admissions and self-reported methamphetamine use in influencing the passage of methamphetamine policy.
Primack (2009)	Media exposure and marijuana and alcohol use among adolescents	USA	Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey of 1211 high school students to determine the associations between various media exposure types and marijuana and alcohol use in adolescents, after controlling for multiple demographic, intrinsic, and environmental risk factors for substance use. • On average students reported 8.6 hours media use daily. • Marijuana use is independently associated with increased music exposure. • Alcohol was independently associated with increased movie exposure but not music exposure. • Exposure to video games and books were associated with reduced odds of having used either substance.
Slater (2009)	Self-Reported News Attention Does Assess	USA	Randomly generated exposure to media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A pool of 120 eligible news stories concerning violent crime, car crashes, and other unintentional injuries was randomly selected from a national random sample of such news coverage. These stories were manipulated to contain or not contain reference to alcohol as a contributing factor in the incident.

	Differential Processing of Media Content: An Experiment on Risk Perceptions Utilizing a Random Sample of U.S. Local Crime and Accident News		reports about alcohol-related consequences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent with predictions and prior cross-sectional survey results, self-reports of attention and the exposure treatment interacted in estimating concern about alcohol-related risks. • Among the college students studied, simple exposure to news stories describing alcohol-related violent crime, car crashes, or other forms of injury, did not alone increase their concern about such risks. • As attention to such stories increases, concern about alcohol-related risk increases, but only in the condition in which participants were exposed to the stories mentioning alcohol as a causal factor in the crime or accident.
Slater et al. (2011)	Assessing Media Campaigns Linking Marijuana Non-Use with Autonomy and Aspirations: “Be Under Your Own Influence” and ONDCP’s “Above the Influence	USA	Randomised controlled trial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 media-based interventions between 2005 and 2009 to help reduce adolescent marijuana use. These emphasised the substance inconsistencies with personal aspirations. • Randomised community and school trial. • Results indicate that earlier effects of the “Be Under Your Own Influence” intervention replicated only in part, and that the most plausible explanation of the weaker effects is high exposure to the similar but more extensive ONDCP “Above the Influence” national campaign. • Self-reported exposure to the ONDCP campaign predicted reduced marijuana use.
Wincup (2016)	Scrounger narratives and	UK	Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies the political and media attention paid since 2008 to the allegedly problematic behaviour of drug users who ‘choose’ to pursue their ‘habit’ at the expense of the hardworking taxpayer. This

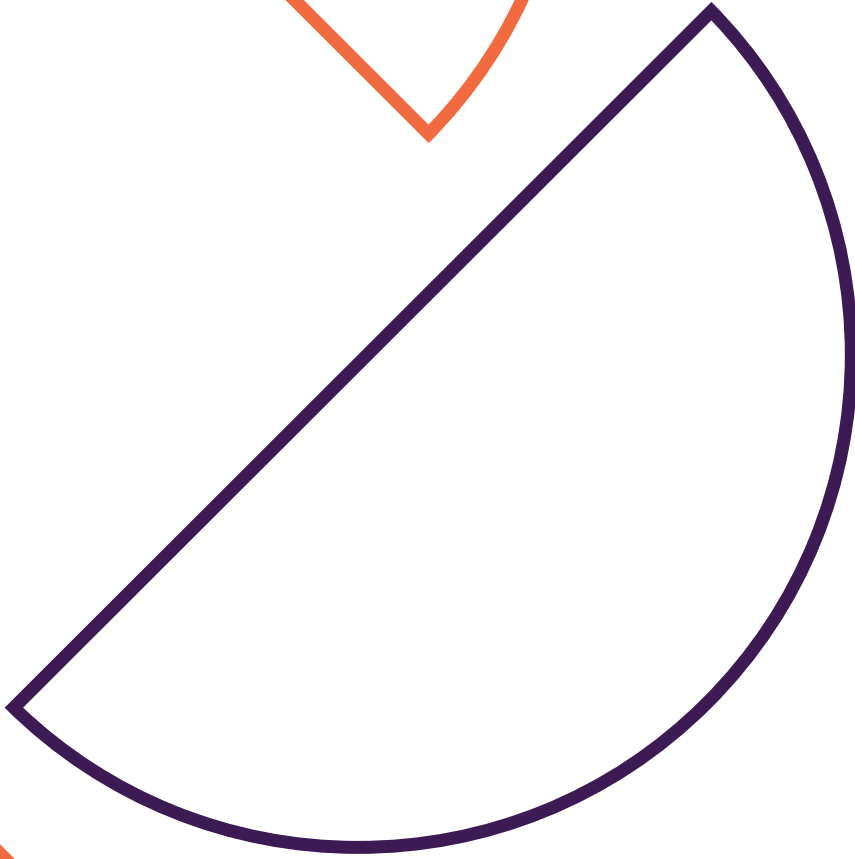
	dependent drug users: welfare, workfare and warfare			<p>censures welfare dependency and stigmatises drug users as ‘undeserving’ claimants, entrenching the ‘war on drug user’ discourse.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stigma is a substantial barrier to recovery. • There is a need to challenge the ‘scrounger’ narrative as applied to drug users through more informed media reporting and less coercive approaches to address drug and welfare dependence.
Zwarun (2012)	Challenging Ourselves to Advance Scholarship on Portrayals of Alcohol in the Media	USA	Commentary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discusses the wide variety of ways that scholars have examined alcohol in the media. • Consistency over time, of drinking being shown as a positive, attractive, rewarding, social activity. • Encourages discussion about what type of media effect researchers look for (attitude, belief, and behaviour) and the level of these media effects and the idea that a pure direct media effect is almost obsolete. • The ways in which media portrayals can affect people have increased, perhaps exponentially, along with exposure to the carefully designed intentional messages, often comes input from friends, friends of friends, and whatever assortment of celebrities or public figures that individuals access through social media.

APPENDIX C

Table 7: Summary of AOD reporting guidelines for the media

Author (date)	Title	Country	Findings
Australian Press Council (2001)	Guidelines: Drugs and drug addiction	Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad guidelines. • Report on public debate about drug use and addiction. • Harmful effects should not be exaggerated or minimised. • Avoid detailed accounts of consumption methods. • Avoid details that could assist with manufacture of drugs. • Do not quote lethal dose of any drug. • Reduce reporting that might encourage experimentation with a drug. • Highlight preventive measures.
AOD media watch (2017)	Reporting on alcohol & other drugs: Guidelines for Journalists	Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stigma prevents people from seeking treatment. • Avoid stigmatising and outdated language. • Do not rush to 'identify' a substance or speculate on a cause of overdose. • Provide balance. • Avoid stereotypes. • Acknowledge counterarguments (including the impact of alcohol and tobacco in addition to 'epidemic' drugs). • Harmful effects of alcohol/other drugs should not be exaggerated or minimised. • In working with people who use drugs – provide a reasonable timeframe (same-day does not always work), respect your sources and the impact that reporting their story might have on their lives.

<p>Global Commission on Drug Policy (2017)</p>	<p>The world drug problem 2017 report countering prejudices about people who use drugs</p>	<p>Global</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subsection titled “Portrayals in the media and among the general public” identifies that media portrayals of drugs and people who use them are overwhelmingly negative. • Discusses the role of stigmatising language and moral panic. Gives recommendations about preferred language to use. • Two dominant narratives in the media, one linking drugs and crime, the other suggesting that the devastating consequences of drug use on an individual are inevitable. • Public opinion and media portrayals reinforce one another, and they contribute to and perpetuate the stigma associated with drugs and drug use. • Commonly encountered terms such as “junkie,” “drug abuser”, and “crackhead” are alienating, and designate people who use drugs as “others,” morally flawed and inferior individuals. • In the US, it has been shown in detailed studies that the public’s perceptions “are largely shaped by the content and magnitude of media coverage on the issue.” • In order to change how drug consumption is considered and how people who use drugs are treated, we need to shift our perceptions, and the first step is to change how we speak.
<p>UK Drug Policy Commission (2012)</p>	<p>Dealing with the stigma of drugs: A guide for journalists</p>	<p>UK</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of the media when it comes to drug users has so far been different from mental health or suicide, focusing more on the criminality of the pushers, the abuses by celebrity drug users and the “war on drugs” in general. • There are times when stories take on a positive aspect or provide important information which can guide the reader, viewer or listener towards better information and a more understanding attitude towards drug use, particularly those who are in or have gone through a period of treatment. • Suggests a shift in framing away from people with drug problems being treated as self-indulgent pleasure seekers who could get rid of their addiction if they wanted to, towards being people with a serious illness. • It isn’t prejudicial or stigmatising to treat someone who has broken the law - whether through possession of drugs or a crime committed to pay for drugs – as having done something wrong. • People who are no longer using are still associated with their AOD using (and criminal) past even if that has not been relevant for quite some time. • Instead of clichéd images of needles etc., try anonymous sources, provide a disguise, seek signed consent, be wary of captions (accurate, fair, sensitive), archive correctly.



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