Media Release

PARENTAL MONITORING OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE CUTS DRINKING IN TEENS

(Auckland: Monday, 5th November 2018): New research being presented in Auckland today has found that when parents monitor their teens’ use of social media, the odds of them drinking are reduced.

The findings are being presented for the first time at the APSAD Scientific Alcohol and Drug Conference, where leading researchers, clinicians, policy makers and community representatives from across Australasia are gathered to share latest insights into major alcohol and other drug issues facing society today.

“This study helps us understand some of the factors associated with teen drinking and what we can do to mitigate them,” says lead researcher Anna Smout who is part of the CREMS (Centre for Research Excellence in Mental Health and Substance Use) team at the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC) at UNSW focusing on preventing substance use and related harms in adolescents.

In Australia, 97 per cent of 14-15 year-olds and 99 per cent of 16-17 year-olds are spending an average of three hours or more each day on social networking sites. Time spent on these sites has been linked to problem drinking, with peer alcohol-related content named as a critical factor in this relationship.

The NDARC study sought to analyse the relationship between social media use and alcohol consumption, and the effect of parental monitoring on these relationships. Examples of parent monitoring include critically discussing media content with your child (active monitoring) or placing limits on use (restrictive monitoring).

Preliminary analyses revealed that time spent on social media is associated with increased odds of drinking over time, but only when adolescents are seeing images of others drunk, passed out or using drugs.

Notable was the finding that when parents are monitoring, the link between seeing images of friends drunk, passed out or using drugs and increased drinking disappears.

In a country where 60 per cent of parents report never monitoring their child’s social media use, this has important implications for parents and young people, the researchers say.

“These findings are encouraging for parents,” says Associate Professor Nicola Newton from CREMS, Chief Investigator of the study. “This research gives parents insight into steps they can take to reduce the risk of their teens drinking. In this instance, the take home message is: continue to monitor your child’s social media use throughout their adolescence.”

“However there’s still more work to be done,” she cautioned. “We now need to better understand exactly what kind of monitoring practices are most effective in this context, and how to implement them,” she said.

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ABOUT APSAD AUCKLAND 2018
The APSAD Scientific Alcohol and Drug Conference is the southern hemisphere’s largest summit on alcohol and other drugs attracting leading researchers, clinicians, policy makers and community representatives from across the region. The Conference is run by the Australasian Professional Society on Alcohol and other Drugs (APSAD), Asia Pacific’s leading multidisciplinary organisation for professionals involved in the alcohol and other drugs field. This year’s conference will showcase high quality and state of the art scientific research into treatment, prevention and policy. It is being held at the Pullman Auckland Hotel, New Zealand 4-7 November.

• View the APSAD Auckland 2018 Program
• Read more about the Australasian Professional Society on Alcohol and other Drugs (APSAD)
• Contact Petrana Lorenz to arrange an interview or find out about other key topics.

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