

Launch of online alcohol workshop

An internet-based initiative to minimise alcohol-related harm will be launched later this month.

The online training was developed following recognition that professional development on how to identify alcohol issues and manage them was needed by health professionals. Tangible and practical ways of dealing with alcohol issues were required. As well, World Health Organisation research findings indicated that five minutes of advice was as effective as 20 minutes of brief counselling.

The Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners (RNZCGP) and the Alcohol Advisory Council (ALAC) therefore joined forces to develop a programme.

ALAC has also made early intervention a strategic priority and plans to do a great deal of work in this area over the next four years.

"We've made good progress over the last year, and this training programme is one we're proud to get off the blocks," ALAC CEO Dr Michael MacAvoy said. *"Early intervention re-*

quires leadership and those experiencing harm need the leadership that GPs and allied health professionals are often in a prime position to provide."

The workshop will carry CME credits and can be completed in the comfort of your own home or office.

"It need not take up precious consultation time. As the WHO research suggests, a quick intervention can be effective so the training has been designed to be incorporated into practice and a regular consultation timeslot," College president Dr Helen Rodenburg said. *"This system will give you solutions too – it's not about just uncovering an issue."*

The primary target for the new resource is GP registrars, but it provides an important educative tool for all medical professionals. Nurses and public health organisations in particular may benefit from the training too.

College CEO Claire Austin praised the work of the joint development team.

"We need GPs to be comfortable and skilful about discussing alcohol

use and related problems in general practice," Ms Austin said. In the new primary care environment, it was important for general practice team members to work together to address alcohol use and related problems.

The workshop comprises a series of case studies simulating consultation and covers a range of topics like alcohol and pregnancy, alcohol and old people, screening, assessment and management. It also includes a lifestyle screening tool that detects binge drinking and other drug use.

Around 80% of the population is seen by GPs in a one-year period or about 95% within one to five years. One in five patients in a GP's practice will have some type of alcohol problem.

"The idea is to help GPs act early, and help the patient monitor and control their drinking before problems become too severe."

The resource will be available on the College website and is very simple and cost-effective for busy GPs to complete.