Non-adherents in mandatory substance abuse evaluation following a DUI offense: Their characteristics and reasons for non-compliance.

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Abstract
This study investigates the characteristics of individuals who fail to comply with mandated assessment and remedial measures following a DUI conviction. The characteristics of remedial program non-adherents, including sociodemographic data and driving history, will be described and compared with a matched sample of program adherents. Moreover, an attempt to discern a predictive model for risk of non-adherence will be undertaken.

Introduction
There is a consensus among highway safety advocates and public health professionals [1] that an arrest for driving under the influence of alcohol (DUI) is a valuable opportunity to identify high risk drivers and initiate remedial protocols. The driving risks posed by those with alcohol and other drug disorders (AOD) are clear. About 33% of those arrested for DUI become repeat offenders (i.e., recidivists) [2]. Approximately 35% to 40% of all fatally injured drinking drivers had a prior arrest for DUI [3].

The non-compliance rate in the mandatory remedial program for Articles 76 and 73 of Quebec's Highway Code offenders is approximately 50%. Little is known about the characteristics of these individuals and the risks they pose. It is plausible that DUI offenders who fail to obey legal sanctions and whose substance abuse status remains unresolved represent a particularly high-risk group for future DUI problems. Unfortunately, systematic study of program adherence is lacking, and pertinent information must be deduced from studies investigating other DUI issues. For example, in a study of 126 hardcore recidivists in prison, researchers [4] found that 62% had never complied with mandated remedial programs. A better understanding of these individuals is paramount to a more accurate appraisal of the overall effectiveness of the remedial strategy, and to clarify the factors contributing to this troubling non-compliance rate. This study addresses the following specific questions:

a) Using systematic criteria for determining compliance, what is the precise rate of non-compliance?
b) Are these groups different on administrative variables such as sociodemographic factors (e.g., gender, age), the types and frequency of risky behaviors (e.g., number and type of past arrests, accidents, speeding tickets, demerit points, driving with a suspended permit)?

c) Can a model or models be proposed that significantly predict who is at high risk for non-compliance based upon administrative data and group membership?

d) Can subgroups be identified within the non-adherent groups based upon, for example, specific recidivism and accident risk levels, substance abuse patterns, and/or individual characteristics?

Methods

Available administrative referral data for adherents and non-adherents for the years 1999, 2000 and 2001, will be used. Denominalized data will be obtained from the Quebec’s Automobile Insurance Society (SAAQ).

According to SAAQ statistics, there are currently more than 15000 individuals who have been referred for remedial measures, 7400 of whom have not presented within the allotted time (i.e., 12 months following driver’ permit suspension). Non-compliance is operationally defined as individuals who have failed to comply within three months after the 12-month license suspension, at which time when all mandated remedial procedures to reacquire a driver’s permit should have been completed. The three-month delay should establish a meaningful cutoff that will exclude stragglers initiating the remedial program at the last moment.

Statistical methods

Initial descriptive statistics will describe adherents and non-adherents. T-tests will test for group differences on normally distributed continuous measures. For non-normally distributed data (e.g., such as number of previous infractions), or ordinal or categorical data (e.g., type of previous infractions, gender), non-parametric tests of group differences and independence (e.g., Mann-Whitney U, Chi²) will be employed. Logistic regression will be used to explore whether a statistical model based upon the available administrative data can predict dichotomous compliance status (0-no, 1-yes). Survival analysis will be used to clarify whether any of the available administrative or prospective data are associated with the length of time from suspension to the time that participation in remedial measures are initiated. Potential sub-groups within the sample of non-adherents will be explored using cluster analyses.

Discussion

This empirical study represents an exceptional exploration of the little understood phenomenon of non-compliance with mandatory remedial DUI programs. A clearer picture of the characteristics of non-adherents and their associated risks, their comparability to program adherents, and potential subgroups within this group should emerge. Indices important to the prediction of compliance may be identified. The data will also contribute to future research initiatives, including: a) evaluation of predictive models by prospectively testing their accuracy in predicting compliance in new cases, and b) measurement of the impact of corrective measures that are implemented to reduce non-compliance.

References

