Is an Alcohol Ignition Interlock Programme a Useful Tool for Changing the Alcohol and Driving Habits of Drink-Drivers?

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This study evaluates whether the completion of a medically supervised alcohol ignition interlock programme (AIIP) results in lasting changes of the behaviour of drink drivers and whether such a programme is more effective than a conventional licence revocation.

In Sweden, DWI offenders can voluntarily select a 2-year AIIP in lieu of a 12-month licence revocation. The AIIP includes regular medical checkups designed to alter alcohol use habits. The study has a quasi-experimental design. Two groups of controls were used for comparisons. One with revoked licences, but with no comparable opportunity to participate in an AIIP and another with DWI offenders who could have participated in the AIIP but chose to not do so. Significantly more offenders from the AIIP group were relicensed two and three years after the DWI offence than from the other groups. According to the AUDIT scores, participants in the AIIP had lower rates of harmful alcohol consumption compared to controls one and three years after the DWI offence. In the post-treatment period the rate of DWI recidivism was about 60% and the rate of police-reported traffic accidents about 80% lower than during the 5-year period prior to the offence. Among controls being relicensed a similar reduction in traffic accidents, but not in DWI recidivism, was observed. In the post-treatment period sick leave, but not hospital-care utilisation, differed significantly between the groups.

CONCLUSIONS: The completion of an AIIP has favourable effects compared to conventional licence revocation and would appear to be a useful tool for attaining lasting changes in the alcohol and driving habits of DWI offenders.

Keywords: Alcohol, Interlock/alcolock program, Recidivism