# Development and evaluation of a school-based prevention program for alcohol and cannabis use delivered via the internet

## Researcher

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## Summary

This study identifies a gap between the quality of well-designed and evaluated prevention programs, and the quality of those prevention programs implemented in schools. In Australia there exists an abundance of expertise in the area of drug prevention and it would be of considerable benefit for educators to draw from this expertise and implement programs which are acceptable to teachers and students and most effective in reducing drug use.

The CLIMATE Schools: Alcohol and Cannabis Course was developed to address the need for sequential and developmentally appropriate school-based drug prevention. The course, which is founded on current evidence-based research, adopts a harm minimisation goal for licit drugs, and overcomes common obstacles to implementation by delivering the core material over the Internet.

This medium offers major advantages over traditional implementation methods for school-based prevention programs since it requires limited staff training and preparation time, guarantees consistency, is easy and flexible to deliver, and engages and maintains student interest and involvement.

## Outcomes

Results from the large cluster randomised controlled trial found the course to be a feasible and acceptable means of teaching school-based drug prevention for both licit and illicit drugs. The course was also found to be more effective than the usual health curriculum in increasing alcohol and cannabis knowledge and reducing the use of these drugs. Overall, the Internet-based course is scalable and provides a promising framework for the provision of school-based education and prevention in the future.

## References

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