Effects of an automated digital brief prevention intervention targeting adolescents and young adults with risky alcohol and other substance use: study protocol for a randomised controlled trial

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## Sample

"The target group for the current study is adolescents and young adults aged 15 to 25 years with self-reported substance use, a capacity to understand the Swedish language and access to the Internet. Based on a power calculation to detect a small effect size (Cohen's d=0.2),70 the aim is to include 800 participants." (Authors, 3-4)

## Implications For Stakeholders About

Healthcare

# Abstract

IntroductionAdolescence and young adulthood is a period in life when individuals may be especially vulnerable to harmful substance use. Several critical developmental processes are occurring in the brain, and substance use poses both short-term and long-term risks with regard to mental health and social development. From a public health perspective, it is important to prevent or delay substance use to reduce individual risk and societal costs. Given the scarcity of effective interventions targeting substance use among adolescents and young adults, cost-effective and easily disseminated interventions are warranted. The current study will test the effectiveness of a fully automated digital brief intervention aimed at reducing alcohol and other substance use in adolescents and young adults aged 15 to 25 years.Methods and analysisA two-arm, double-blind, randomised controlled trial design is applied to assess the effectiveness of the intervention. Baseline assessment, as well as 3-month and 6-month follow-up, will be carried out. The aim is to include 800 participants with risky substance use based on the screening tool CRAFFT (Car,Relax, Alone, Forget, Friends, Trouble). Recruitment, informed consent, randomisation, intervention and follow-up will be implemented online. The primary outcome is reduction in alcohol use, measured by Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test total score. Secondary outcomes concern binge drinking, frequency of alcohol consumption, amount of alcohol consumed a typical day when alcohol is consumed, average daily drinks per typical week, other substance use, mental health, sexual risk behaviours and perceived peer pressure. Moreover, the study involves analyses of potential moderators including perfectionism, openness to parents, help-seeking and background variables.Ethics and disseminationThe study was approved by the Swedish Ethical Review Authority (no. 2019–03249). The trial is expected to expand the knowledge on digital preventive interventions for substance using adolescents and young adults. Results will be disseminated in research journals, at conferences and via the media.Trial registration number24 September 2019, ISRCTN91048246; Pre-results.

# Outcome

"The current study will test the effectiveness of a fully automated digital brief intervention aimed at reducing alcohol and other substance use in adolescents and young adults aged 15 to 25 years." (Authors, in Abstract)