

# Military Drinks:Ration

A protocol for a randomised controlled trial of the UK Armed Forces military personnel

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# Disclosures

- I am employed as a Medial Officer & General Practitioner by the Royal Navy.
- The Defence Medical Services are funding this study as part of a Doctorate in Psychological Medicine (MD(Res)) at King's College London.
- **Supervisors:**
  - **N Fear** is part funded by a grant from the UK Ministry of Defence and is a trustee of a charity supporting the health and wellbeing of service personnel, veterans and their families.
  - D Leightley is funded by the Forces in Mind Trust as a Research Fellow and is a member of the UK Army Reserve service.
  - N Greenberg is the Veteran's Mental Health lead for the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

# Disclosure of Financial Support

- This project has received financial support from the UK Defence Medical Services in the form of:
  - Academic fees for the Doctorate of Psychological Medicine degree
  - Travel & subsistence costs for attendance at conferences
- This project has received in-kind support from the UK Defence Medical Services in the form of:
  - Printing & poster production
  - Approval for data collection to happen at periodic dental inspections
- Potential for conflicts of interest:
  - I have received no payments or funding relating to the Drinks:Ration app

# Mitigating Potential Bias

The UK Defence Medical Services have had no influence over the study design or the content of this presentation.

# Learning Objectives

At the end of this presentation participants will be able to:

- Recognise that military personnel use alcohol in different ways and volumes than civilian populations.
- Describe the Drinks:Ration smartphone application and its relationship to behaviour change theories.
- Explain the Drinks:Ration randomised controlled trial in the UK military population.



General Lord Dannatt said abuse of alcohol has long been a chronic problem in the Army (Image: Getty)

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## Army's 'chronic' alcohol problem laid bare with 8,000 needing help in last six years

The shocking figures reveal some of the brave members of the Army, RAF and Navy have developed serious drink-related illness like paranoia, cirrhosis and chronic alcoholic brain syndrome

By **Sean Rayment**

18:32, 19 Jun 2021



COMMENTS

# Background

3 in 5

...(59%) UK Regular Armed Forces personnel were potentially at increased or high risk of alcohol-related harm.



This was **higher than the UK general population** (3 in 7, 42%).

584

personnel with a Read code for alcohol abuse/misuse entered in their electronic medical record between 1 Nov 2018 and 30 Apr 2019

↑ from 518 between 1 May 2018 and 31 Oct 2018    ↑ from 457 between 1 Nov 2017 and 30 Apr 2018

39

UK Armed Forces personnel aeromedically evacuated due to, or linked to, alcohol between 1 May 2018 and 30 April 2019 (1 in 27 aeromeds)

↓ from 41 between 1 May 17 and 30 Apr 18 (1 in 22 aeromeds)

96

personnel downgraded with principal or contributory cause related to alcohol use at 1 May 2019

↑ from 72 as at 1 October 2018

17

personnel medically discharged with principal or contributory cause related to alcohol use between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019

↓ from 25 between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018

53

personnel with a Read code for drug abuse/misuse entered in their electronic medical record between 1 May 2018 and 30 April 2019

↓ from 82 between 1 May 2018 and 31 Oct 2018    ↑ from 66 between 1 Nov 2017 and 30 Apr 2018

# Methodology 1

- Hypothesis:  
The Drinks:Ration app is more effective at reducing alcohol consumption compared to usual management.
- Design:  
Two arm RCT powered to detect a four unit decrease in alcohol consumption at follow-up.
- Primary Outcome:  
Change in alcohol units consumed between baseline and 84 days.
- Secondary Outcomes:
  - Change in AUDIT score, change in quality of life assessment, change in drinking motivations & app usability.
  - Correlation of behaviours with alcohol consumption

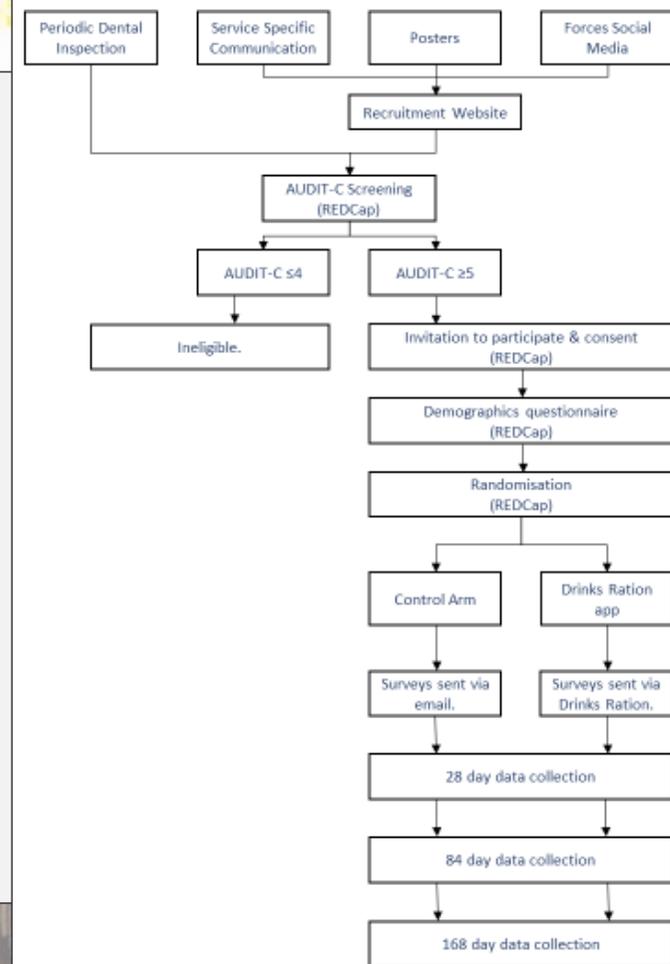
# Methodology 2

## Sample size:

- 218 per arm  
(80% power / alpha at 5% / 1:1 allocation / two-tailed test)
- To detect mean change of 4 units / week
- Total = 728 participants (allowing 40% attrition)

## Data Collection:

Intervention arm – Drinks:Ration app  
Control arm – REDCap



# Results

- Recruitment from Oct 22
- CONSORT / TIDieR standards for reporting
- Analyses:
  - Descriptive demographic analysis
  - Repeated measures mixed methods modelling for primary and secondary outcomes

# Conclusions

This trial aims to, for the first time, demonstrate the effectiveness of an app based behavioural intervention in reducing alcohol consumption in the UK military.

This could lead to the app being integrated into UK Defence policies for managing and supporting military personnel seeking help for alcohol use.

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