

Call for papers for special section of *Drug and Alcohol Review* – How substance use is portrayed in digital media and what impacts can it have

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With the proliferation of smart devices, social media (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, etc.), and video and music streaming sites (Netflix, Disney Plus, YouTube, Spotify, etc.), our digital media consumption has fundamentally changed. We now have millions of hours of entertainment available at our fingertips and consume more diverse digital media than ever before. Furthermore, thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic, many of us are staying at home and consuming more digital media than ever before.

However, digital media consumption may come with risks and content is often not screened, classified or controlled like traditional media content (e.g. TV ads and movies) and viewers are likely to be confronted with a significant amount of substance-related content. Indeed, alcohol and other drug references are common on social media platforms and predominantly positive (e.g. glorifying substance use), substance use appears to be more common on video streaming sites than traditional television, and advertising/sponsorship has shifted to account for these media changes (e.g. sponsoring “influencers”). Although research focusing on how substances are portrayed or discussed on digital media platforms has made considerable progress, there are a number of unresolved problems in how we measure alcohol exposure across different digital media platforms and how we determine its impacts. Research has often used self-reports or estimated exposure by content-analysing popular films, TV programs and songs. Obviously, new techniques are needed to more accurately measure exposure. Thus, research is needed to: (i) determine how drugs/alcohol are being presented and discussed on contemporary media platforms (video streaming, social media, music streaming, video games etc.) and how different these may be to traditional platforms (broadcast television); (ii) develop innovative techniques to analyse the large quantities of digital media data to provide evidence on prevalence or content; (iii) investigate how advertising is utilizing contemporary media and what new challenges does it present; and (iv) reveal whether these platforms can be beneficial to those who aim to reduce their substance use (e.g. support groups on social media, interventions implemented through social media, health promotion campaigns).

Additionally, it is important to understand what impact digital exposure to substances has on substance use or related cognitions. Several theories posit that exposure to this content (particularly positive content that glorifies substance use) can lead to more substance use or a change in substance-related cognitions (Social Learning Theory, Facebook effect model, Dual Process Model, Social Norms, etc.), and some argue that there is a causal relationship between exposure to substance use in digital media and substance use. Thus, additional research is needed to: (i) determine what impact exposure to substances has on contemporary digital media platforms; (ii) determine what type of exposure is more impactful on cognitions or substance use (e.g. more positive posts); (iii) whether exposure on some platforms is more impactful than others (e.g. social media exposure vs. streaming exposure); and (iv) whether any factors can mitigate the effect of exposure to substance use on cognitions or substance use.

This Special Section aims to bring together contributions that address these problems and look at how substance use is portrayed in digital media on diverse platforms, what impact it has, what new innovative methods are available to measure exposure and its impact, and whether these platforms can be used to reduce substance use.

If you are interested in submitting a paper for this issue, or have any queries, please contact the Editorial Office – dar@apsad.org.au

Papers must follow the [author guidelines](#) and word limits. Please note that all papers will need to be entered on [Manuscript Central](#) and will be subject to peer review by at least two independent reviewers. When submitting, authors should select the appropriate manuscript type (e.g. Original Paper, Review) and note in the cover letter that the paper is intended for this special section.

Authors are asked to submit their papers by the end of September 2022 for the Special Section to be published by mid-2023.