Tackling substance use is a global priority. Scotland has one of the highest rates of alcohol-related mortality in Western Europe and one in five deaths in Scotland are caused by smoking. Substance use harms are disproportionally focused in disadvantaged communities. In line with Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU)’s mission to serve the common good, we aim to take account of issues of social justice and inequality in our work.

Led by Dr Carol Emslie, GCU’s Substance Use and Misuse research explores gender and alcohol consumption, alcohol-related violence, smoking cessation, and substance dependence and stigma.

Gender and drinking
Despite significant changes in women’s drinking, men remain more likely to drink heavily and to die from alcohol-related causes. Dr Emslie’s recent Medical Research Council (MRC)-funded research on drinking in mid-life highlights how excessive drinking remains normalised even in this age group, and how men regard drinking pints of beer in the pub together as ‘an act of friendship’, leading to both potentially health-damaging (excessive drinking) and health-promoting (social support) behaviours.

We are also conducting the Glasgow section of a randomised controlled trial which aims to reduce the frequency of excessive drinking among men in deprived areas using mobile phone text messages, as part of a National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) study.

Working with the Glasgow Centre for Population Health and colleagues at the Institute for Social Marketing at the University of Stirling, we are conducting a scoping review of population level interventions which influence alcohol-related harm among women.

Alcohol-related Violence
In recent years there has been increasing concern about levels of alcohol-related disorder and
violence in Scotland. Dr Alasdair Forsyth has led research on this topic, including studying the effects of a glassware ban on licensed premises, conducting focus groups with street drinkers, interviewing young offenders and observing alcohol-related violence in Glasgow nightclubs. His current work with colleagues Professor Liz Gilchrist and Dr Lana Ireland, funded by the Alcohol Research Council, explores the role of alcohol in intimate partner violence. This research involves administering research tools designed to measure alcohol use disorder (AUDIT) and intimate partner violence (Conflict Tactics Inventory) to those involved in either conflictual or contented relationships.

**Smoking**

People derive significant health benefits from stopping smoking but certain groups experience health inequalities that make it particularly difficult to stop. Dr Susan Kerr is leading mixed-methods research which focuses on smoking cessation interventions for people with severe and enduring mental health problems and for professionals who work with older adults. She is also seeking to develop and evaluate tobacco and alcohol-related health promotion interventions for people with learning disabilities. Dr Kerr’s work highlights the complexity of smoking cessation for these groups of people and the health professionals who work with them.

**Postgraduate researchers**

Our PhD students are exploring fatherhood and drinking (Brian Gallagher); Stigma, alcohol-dependent people and the health professionals who work with them (Tim Laxton); and how alcohol is used in identity construction on Facebook (Jemma Lennox: MRC Social & Public Health Sciences Unit, University of Glasgow).

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**Further information:**

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