

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR
**FARMER
HEALTH**

in partnership with

A black and white photograph of a group of approximately 12 people, including men and women of various ages, sitting around a long table in a meeting room. They are looking towards the camera and smiling. The table is set with papers, water bottles, and coffee cups. The background shows a typical office or meeting room environment with shelves and a window.

**The AITP: reducing
alcohol misuse in the
farming community**

Introduction

Existing rural research

- Increased levels of alcohol misuse than urban counterparts (Booth et al., 2000; Jackson, Doescher, & Hart, 2006; NHMRC, 2007).
- Elevated alcohol-related health risks (Miller et al., 2010)
- 54% of men and 22% of women engage in high single occasion drinking and drink at a high risk level at least monthly (Brumby et al., 2008).

Introduction

Sustainable Farm Families program

- Initiated by WDHS in 2003
- Address health, wellbeing and safety issues among farmers and agricultural workers
- 2200+ farm men and women
- Most important aspect of a healthy Australian farm – a healthy farm family
- Ongoing challenge alcohol misuse and associated mental health

Introduction

Need for training

- Lack of alcohol focused training a barrier to identification, assessment and treatment of clients with alcohol problems (Begun, 2004; Gilbert & Terrel, 2002; Miller & C'de Baca, 1995)
- SFF HP survey data
 - Difficult to discuss alcohol misuse
 - Low referral rates despite knowledge of referral resources

Introduction

Aim

To develop, refine, implement and evaluate a training program for SFF health professionals to increase their alcohol-related knowledge, their confidence in raising alcohol-related issues, and their skills in discussing and responding to the alcohol-related problems experienced by farmers and agricultural workers.

Method

Alcohol Intervention Training Program

Development

Training manual

- Understanding alcohol misuse
- Detecting and assessing alcohol use problems and mental health
- Communication skills
- Brief interventions

Method

Alcohol Intervention Training Program

Refinement

Pilot training program

- 6 experienced SFF HPs
- written and oral feedback

Feedback from reference group

Feedback from linkage partner

Method

Alcohol Intervention Training Program

Implementation

31 SFF health professionals involved in upcoming programs

- Intervention group – 15
- Control group – 16

Intervention group training

- Cairns, QLD
- Melbourne, VIC
- Hamilton, VIC

Training material provided to health professionals

- Pre and post-training questionnaires (controls only involvement)
- Worksheets
- PowerPoint presentation slides
- Post-training information kit

Method

Alcohol Intervention Training Program

Testing schedule

- Same timeline for intervention and controls

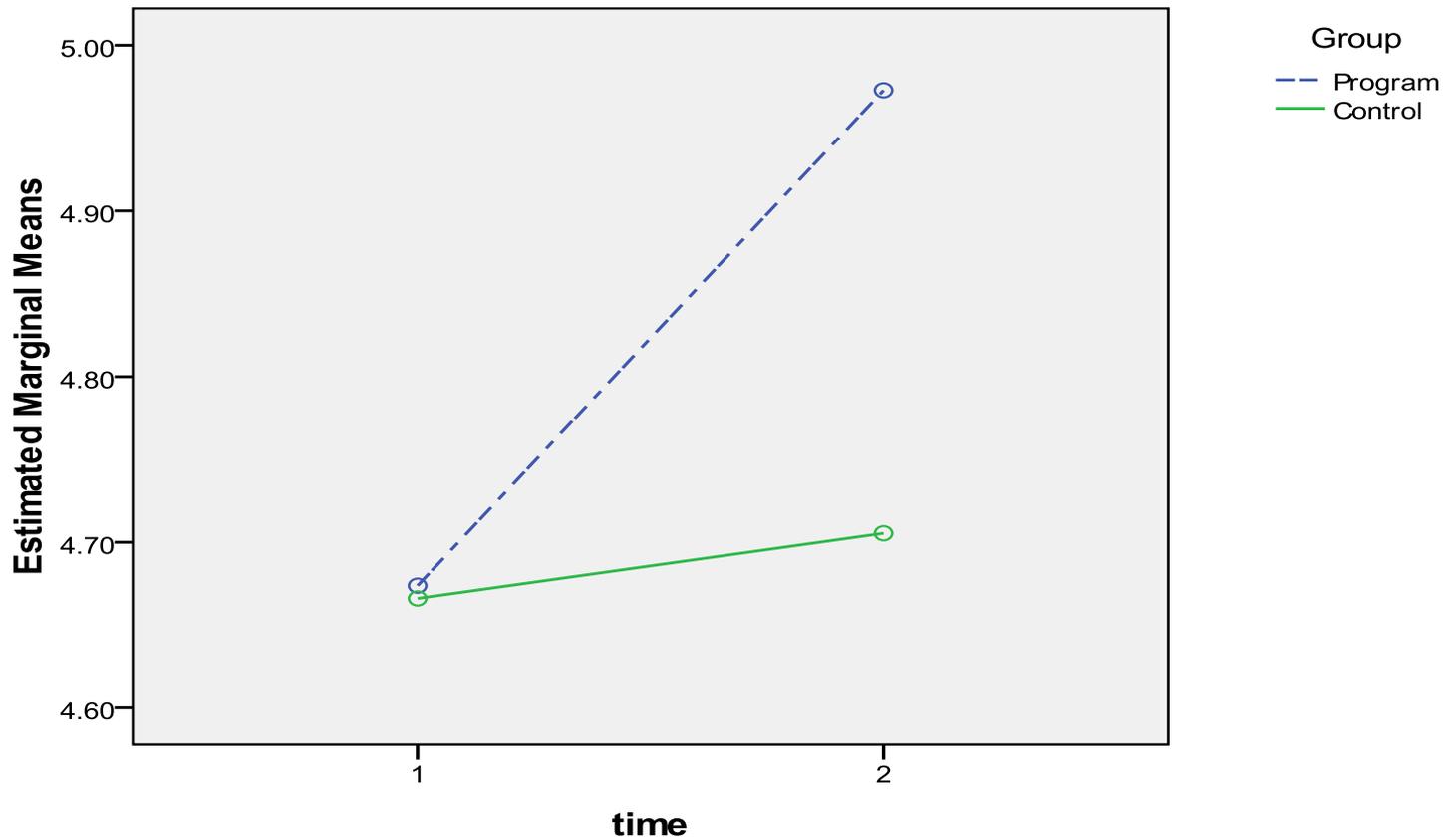
Questionnaires

- Pre, post and 3 month follow-up
- Paper and on-line formats

Results

Self-efficacy

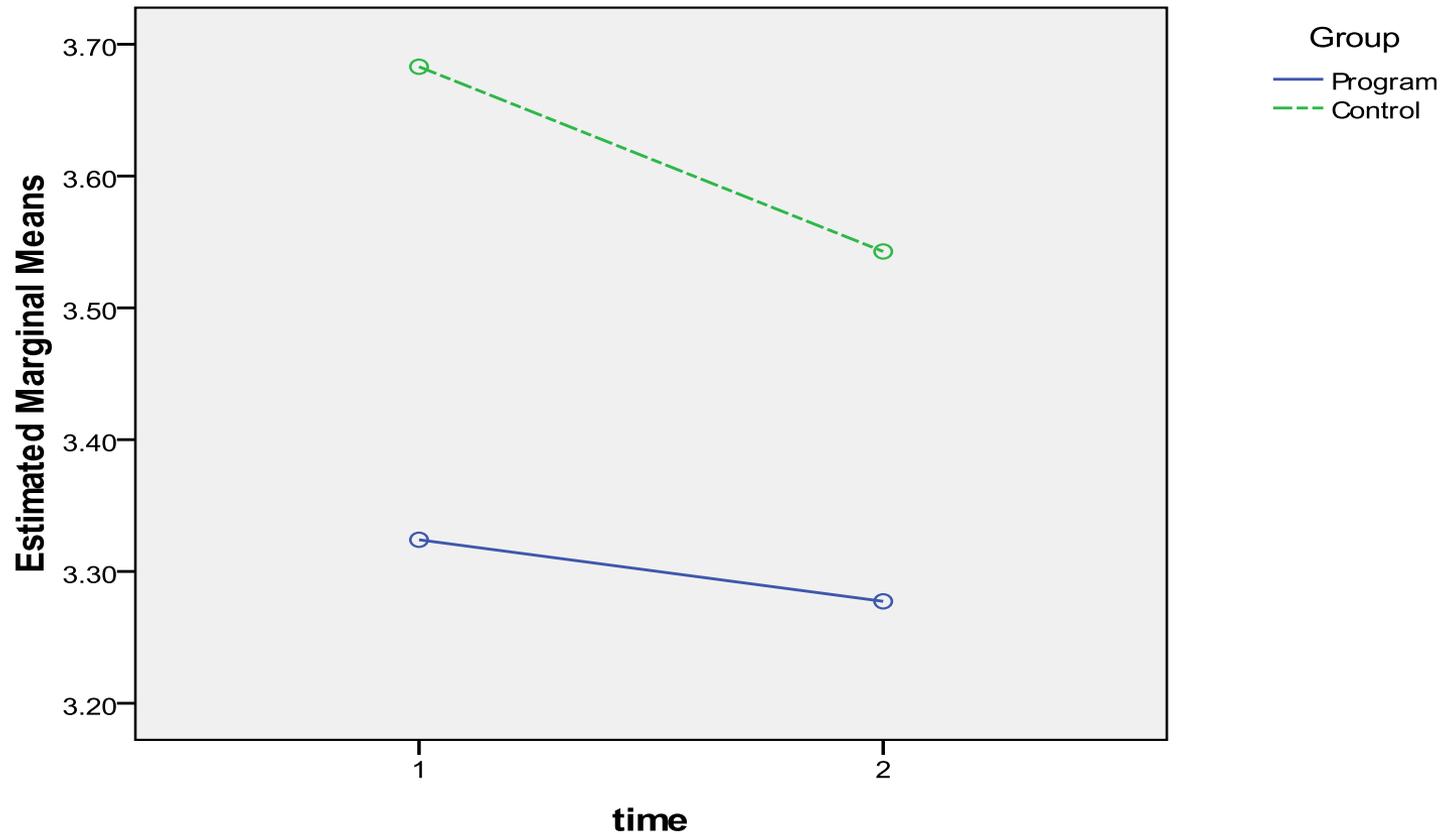
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Results

Perceived Barriers

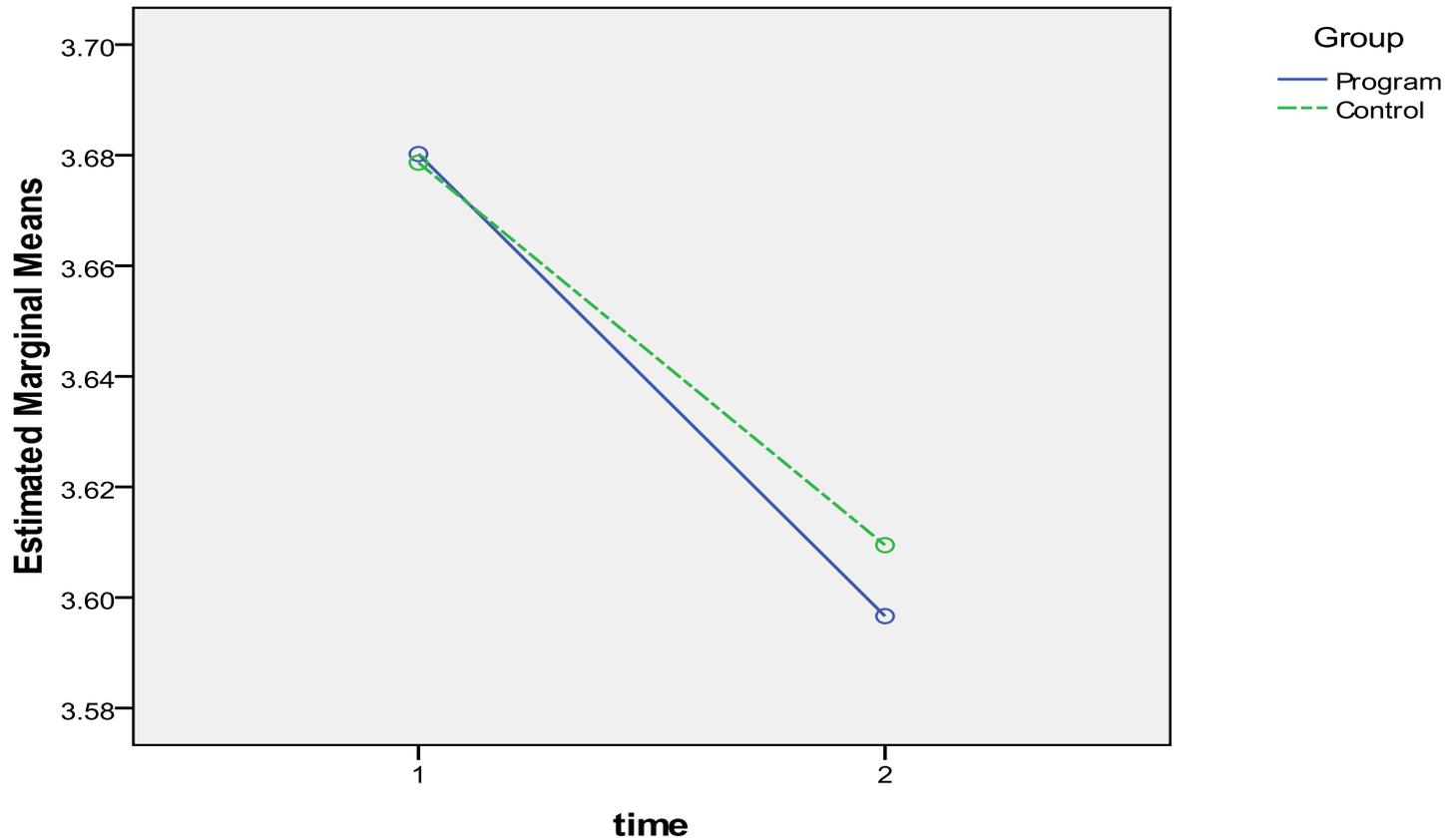
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Results

SAAPQ (Short Answer Alcohol Perception Questionnaire – attitudes to working with people who misuse alcohol)

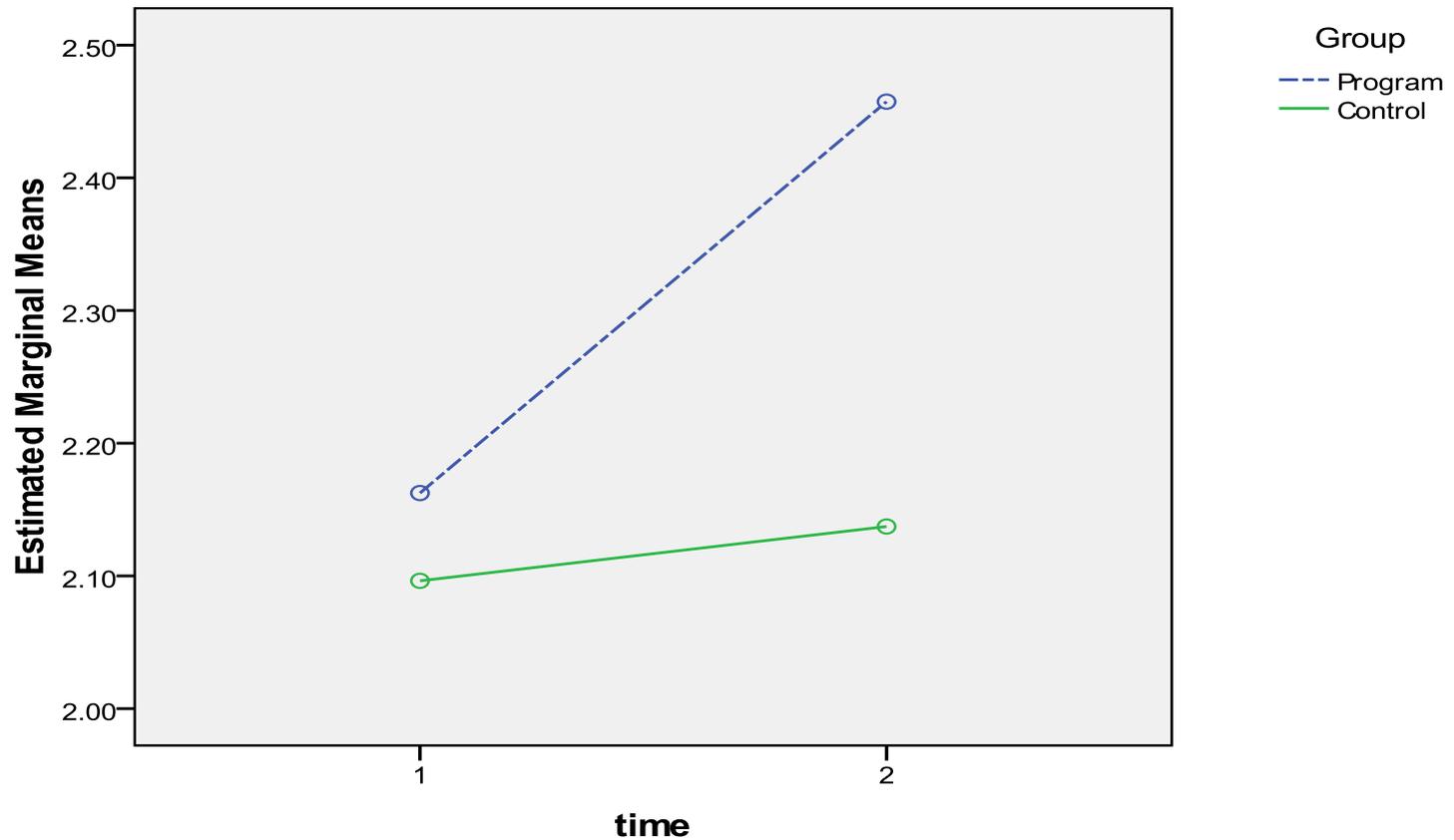
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Results

Knowledge of alcohol misuse

Estimated Marginal Means of SE



Discussion

AITP Improved (significant difference between intervention and control over time) :

- Self-efficacy
- Knowledge of alcohol misuse

Further considerations

- Perceived barriers (different starting points and sig. improvement in control group)
- Attitudes (sig.dec. in both groups) – improvement
- Role of reflection on changing perceived barriers and attitudes

Further Discussion

- Responding to HP feedback
- Longer term impacts of AITP on
 - SFF HPs
 - Farmer health directly

Delivering a message about alcohol abuse in rural areas

THE rural alcohol misuse - and abuse - message needs to be delivered at the grass roots level and the Hamilton-based National Centre for Farmer Health is doing exactly that.

In partnership with the Western District Health Service and Deakin University, it is arming rural health professionals with intervention skills to address the worsening problem.

The centre's director clinical Associate Professor Susan Brumby said the education strategy was part of a broader research project supported by the Australian Research Council in partnership Deakin University School of Psychology and WDHS.

She said the intervention training had been piloted in Hamilton and delivered as far afield as Queensland. This week the program was run in Hamilton for a group of health professionals based in the south-west.

"At the same time our broad-reach Sustainable Farm Families program has successfully engaged farm men and women and provided health assessments and health education packages which are leading to improved health attitudes and behaviours," she said.

"But the health professionals in these programs are telling us about barriers to the identification of, and response to, alcohol-related behaviours and outcomes."

The program is designed

to enhance the knowledge, willingness and confidence of health professionals to discuss and respond to alcohol-related problems, and the impact this has on the behaviours and mental health of the farming community.

Hamilton-based trainer and research assistant Alison Kennedy said she was excited to be part of the ground breaking project.

She said the project could have widespread positive implications both for the health of farm men and women and the health professionals undertaking

the training, who were themselves often farmers.

She said the course included material on the impact of alcohol misuse - physical, psychological, social and financial; measures for assessing alcohol misuse and mental health problems; communication techniques for raising and discussing these problems and practical techniques for reducing alcohol misuse.

Associate Professor David Mellor, head of the Deakin University research team, said he had been working closely with the SFF team

to design a program based on the latest international research into alcohol and mental health problems.

Prof Mellor said the research had also been tailored to the Australian rural context.

"We expect it will provide health professionals with skills to enhance their work and impact positively on farm men and women's health," Professor Mellor said.

For further information, Alison Kennedy can be contacted on 5551 8533 or alison.kennedy@wdhs.net



LOOKING after health . . . Alison Kennedy at the health day for farmers at Hamilton Base Hospital this week.