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**Identifying Client Characteristics Associated with Alcohol
and Other Drug Treatment Retention in Youth**

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Abbreviations

ADHD	Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
AOD	Alcohol and Other Drugs
AUDIT	Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test
BIS	Barratt Impulsivity Scale
CHDS	Christchurch Health and Development Study
CUDIT	Cannabis Use Disorders Identification Test
CYFS	Child Youth and Family Services
DMHDS	Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Study
DSM-IV	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders
MINI	Mini-International Neuropsychiatric Interview
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
TCI	Temperament and Character Inventory
YSS	Youth Specialty Service
YTRS	Youth Treatment Retention Study

Abstract

Treatment retention of youth has been identified as an important part of alcohol and other drug treatment effectiveness. However, ensuring the retention of young people in alcohol and other drug treatment is a constant challenge. It is therefore important to understand why some young people do remain in treatment while others do not. To date, however, there are very few studies on youth treatment retention and those that have been conducted are not in New Zealand settings. The present study examined client characteristics associated with the length of stay in alcohol and other drug treatment programmes. Participants were fifty two young people who had attended a range of alcohol and other drug treatment services across New Zealand. Interviews were conducted using a specifically designed questionnaire examining participant's time in treatment. Data were obtained on client characteristics, including gender, presence of psychopathology, severity and type of substance use and the source of referral. The results failed to identify specific client characteristics that reliably influence alcohol and other drug treatment retention in New Zealand day/residential or outpatient settings. This finding is consistent with much of the previous literature which has generally yielded inconclusive and inconsistent relationships between the client variables measured and staying in treatment.

Foreword

I am a 24 year old female born and bred in Canterbury. I completed a Bachelor of Science at Canterbury University after leaving school in 1999. Initially my interests lay primarily in veterinary science. However, after completing the first year psychology paper I discovered my interest in people, and their behaviour, which lead me to change the direction and focus of my study in subsequent years. At the completion of my undergraduate studies I decided to further my education by studying towards my Master of Science through Massey University.

Upon researching topics for my masters thesis I realised my interests lay in addiction and youth. Growing up in the generation that was directly affected by the lowering of the drinking age and the emergence of the increased use of “trendy” party drugs such as Methamphetamine and Ecstasy stimulated my interest in these areas. I approached the National Addiction Centre about possible research ideas involving substance use and youth. Professor Doug Sellman outlined a study the National Addiction Centre was currently undertaking and put me in touch with Doctor Ria Schroder with regard to my possible inclusion in the study.

After reading the background literature I realized that treatment retention in young people was an extremely worthwhile and important area of research and incorporated both my interests of youth and addiction. I decided to take part in the larger study and used the area of client characteristics associated with treatment retention within the larger study as the basis of my thesis.