

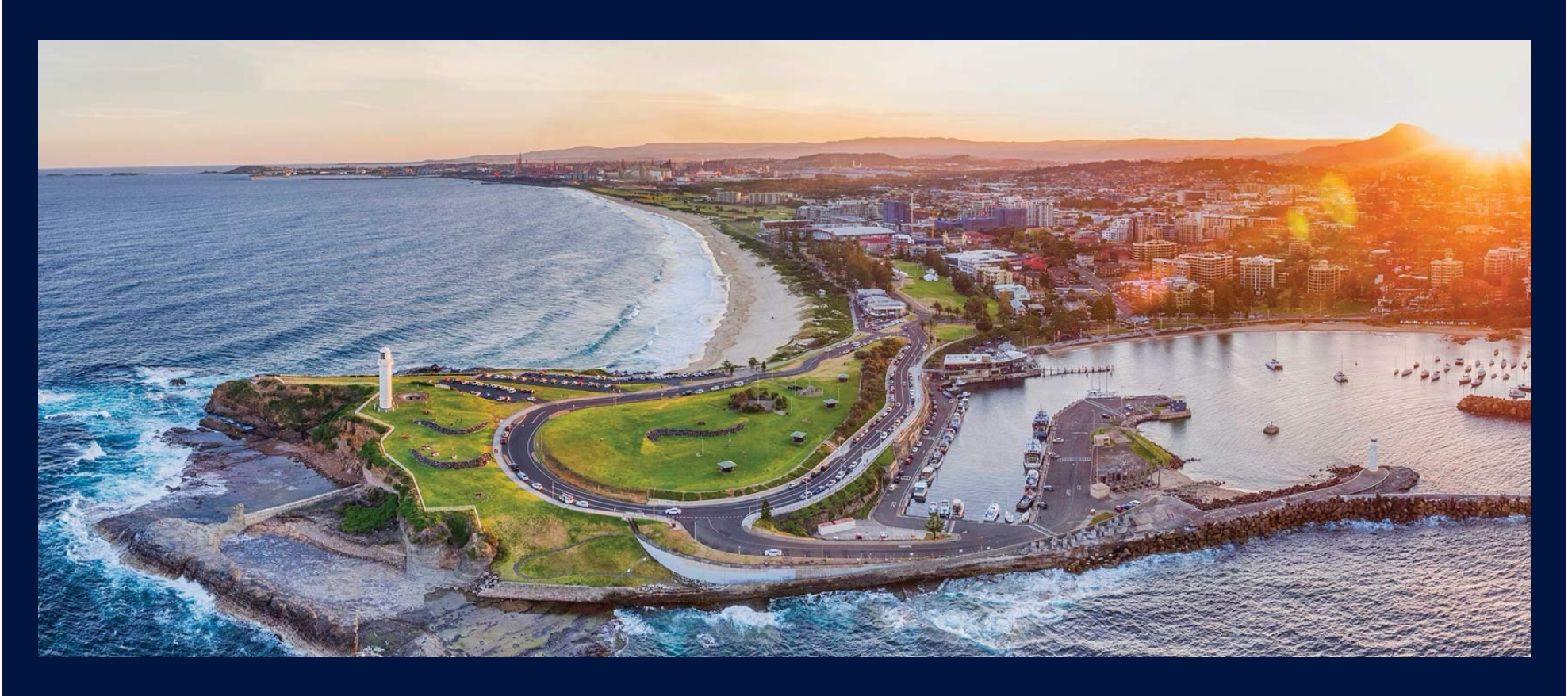
SMART Recovery U.S. National Conference 2026

The Global Impact of SMART Recovery

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UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG
AUSTRALIA



Wollongong, Australia



Kedesh Rehabilitation Services

Evidence: Mutual Help Groups

Attendance and involvement associated with:

- Reductions in substance use
- Broader improvements in functioning

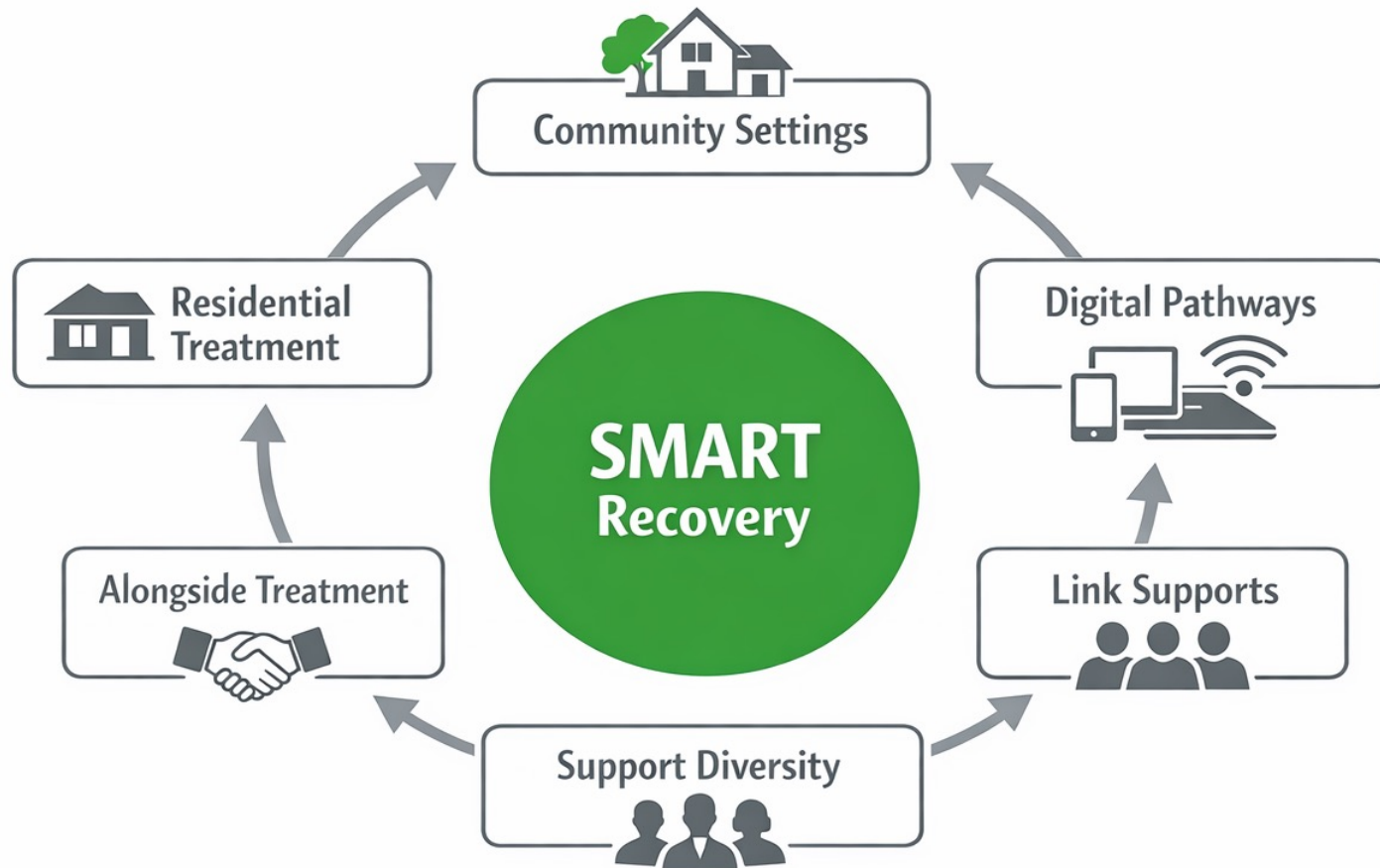
Key future research areas:

- Stigma with medication use
- Adaptations to address diverse populations
- Further research on SMART and other second wave mutual health groups

Kepner & Humphreys, 2025

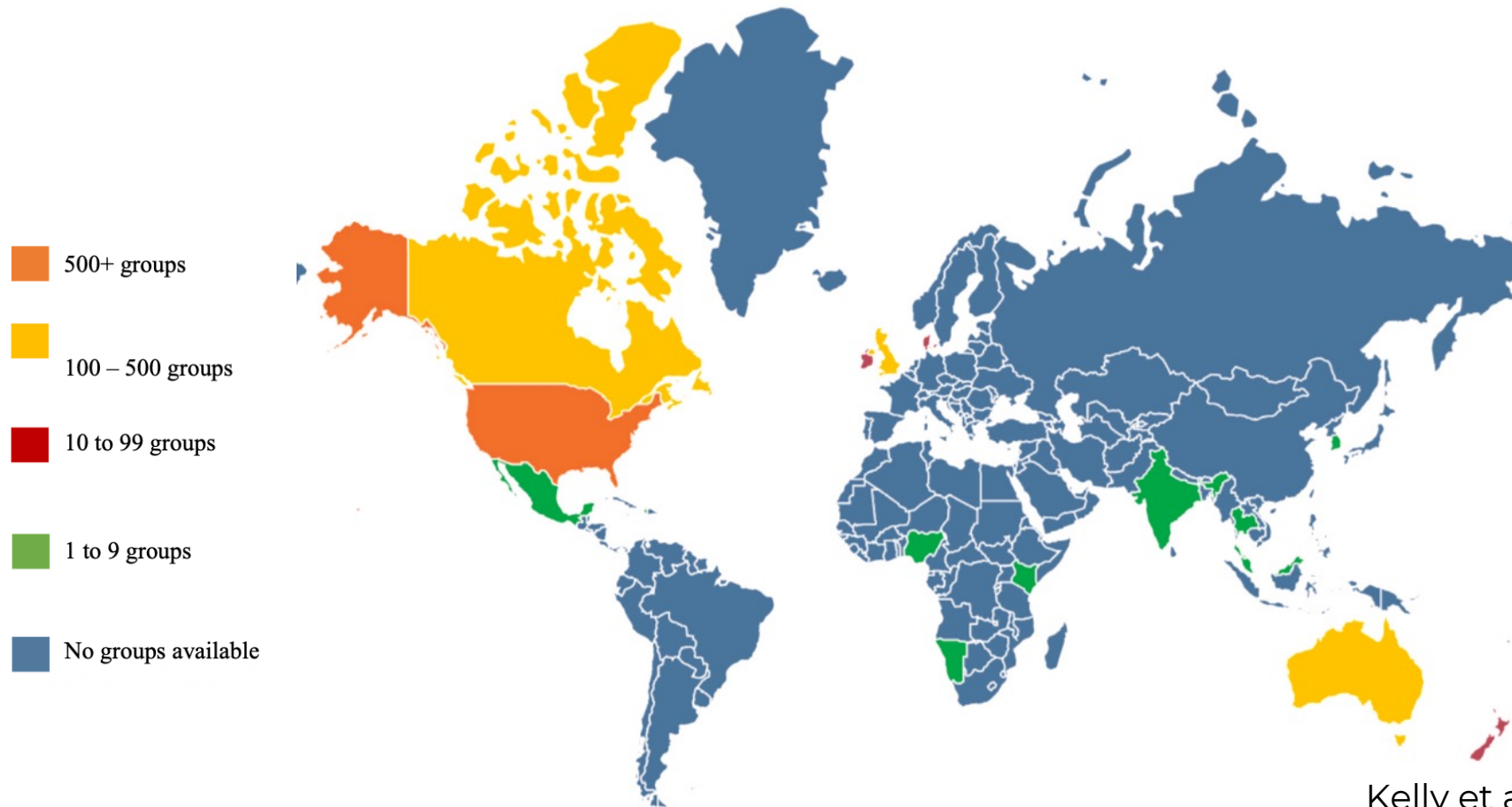
Research focused on SMART Recovery has been steadily increasing

Beck et al., 2017; Kelly et al., 2024; Zemore et al., 2026;



SMART Recovery works across a variety of settings

SMART Recovery Global



Kelly et al., 2021

Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment



SMART Recovery: Australian Research Advisory Group

SMART Principle: Evidence led

SMART Recovery was designed to reflect evidence-based addiction treatment and would “*evolve as that evidence base evolved.*”

Tom Horvath & Julie Yeterian, 2012
Journal of Groups in Addiction & Treatment

SMART Principle: Person Centered, Choice & Evidence Led

Person Centred Care

1. Holistic care
2. Care tailored to individual needs, goals and preferences
3. Choice and involvement in decisions
4. A strong therapeutic alliance
5. Trauma-informed
6. Culturally-safe care.

Machand et al, 2019
Substance Abuse Treatment, Prevention & Policy

Person Centered Care

Better Outcomes

- Treatment addresses the needs of individuals.
- Less likely to drop out.

Human Rights

- We care about people.
- Want people to feel heard, respected & listened to.

Marchand et al. *Substance Abuse Treatment, Prevention, and Policy* (2019) 14:37
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s13011-019-0227-0>

Substance Abuse Treatment,
Prevention, and Policy

REVIEW

Open Access

Conceptualizing patient-centered care for substance use disorder treatment: findings from a systematic scoping review



Kirsten Marchand^{1,2*}, Scott Beaumont^{1,2}, Jordan Westfall³, Scott MacDonald⁴, Scott Harrison⁴, David C. Marsh⁵, Martin T. Schechter^{1,2} and Eugenia Oviedo-Joekes^{1,2}



Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)
International Journal of Drug Policy
journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/drugpo



The relationship between patient-centred care for substance use disorders and patient outcomes: A scoping review

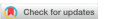


Bronwyn Myers^{a,b,c,*}, Nicholas Da Silva^a, Stella McLaughlin^a, Jessika Purnomo^a, Daria Shumskaya^d, Kaori Koume^d, Sanita Suhartono^d, Giovanna Campello^d, Anja Busse^e

SUBSTANCE ABUSE
2020, VOL. 41, NO. 2, 216–231
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08897077.2019.1671940>

Taylor & Francis
Taylor & Francis Group

REVIEW ARTICLE



The relationship between patient-centered care and outcomes in specialist drug and alcohol treatment: A systematic literature review

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^aIllawarra Institute for Mental Health and School of Psychology, University of Wollongong, Wollongong, New South Wales, Australia; ^bIllawarra Health and Medical Research Institute, University of Wollongong, Wollongong, New South Wales, Australia; ^cSchool of Medicine and Public Health, University of Newcastle, Callaghan, New South Wales, Australia; ^dKedesh Rehabilitation Services, Berkeley, New South Wales, Australia; ^eIllawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District Drug & Alcohol Service, Wollongong, New South Wales, Australia

ABSTRACT

Background: Patient-centered care is strongly advocated as a key for improving the quality of healthcare. Research examining the impact of patient-centered care in healthcare has concluded that there are demonstrable albeit inconsistent relationships between patient experience, quality of care, and healthcare outcomes. Knowledge of the impact of patient-centered care in the treatment of substance use disorder is limited. The aim of this review was to assess relationships

KEYWORDS

Patient-centered care; satisfaction; patient-reported experience; substance use; systematic review

SMART Principles: Person Centered, Choice & Evidence Led

Person Centered Care involves asking
people about their experiences

SMART Recovery Global Survey

Aim

- Survey of people attending SMART Recovery groups globally

Method

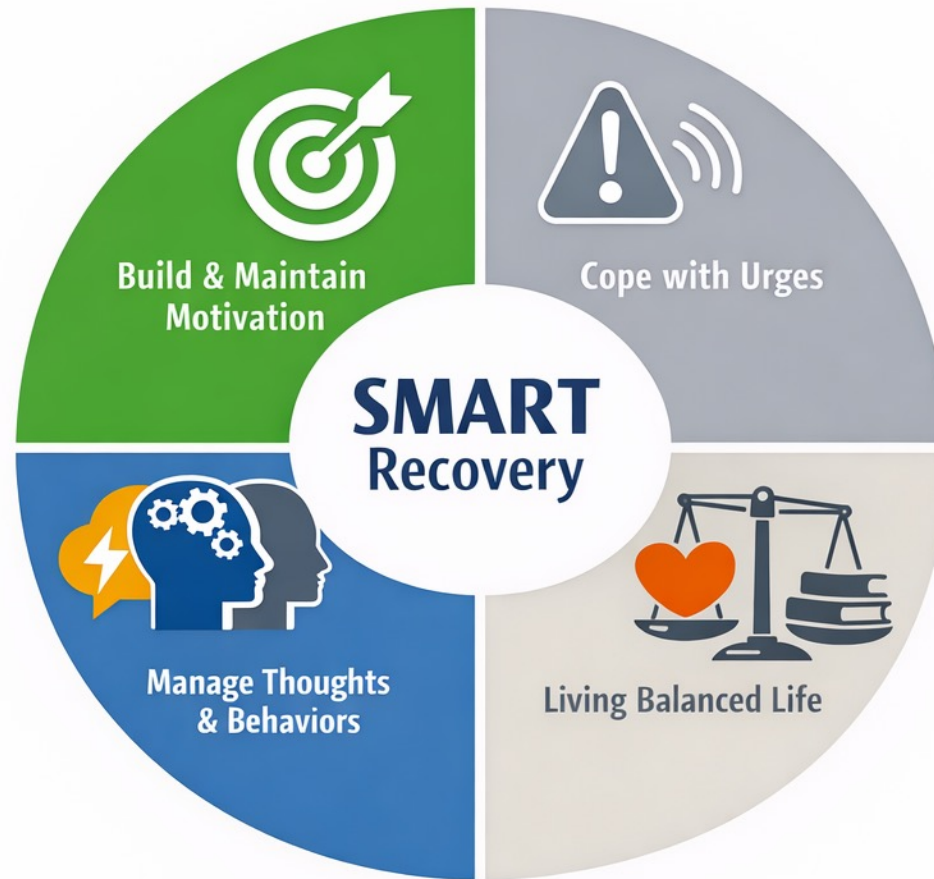
- Online survey was distributed via SMART Recovery US, Australia, Ireland & UK and through SMART Recovery Global
- 926 people completed the survey

Global Survey: Demographics

Variable	Description
Average Age	38 years
Gender	55% men / 42% women
Country	USA 64% / UK & Ireland 9% / Australia 8%
Race	79% white / 7.5% Asian or Pacific / Black 5%
Employment	76% employed / 9% retired
Legal involvement	37% no previous legal involvement
Main reason for attending	70% alcohol or other substance use issues

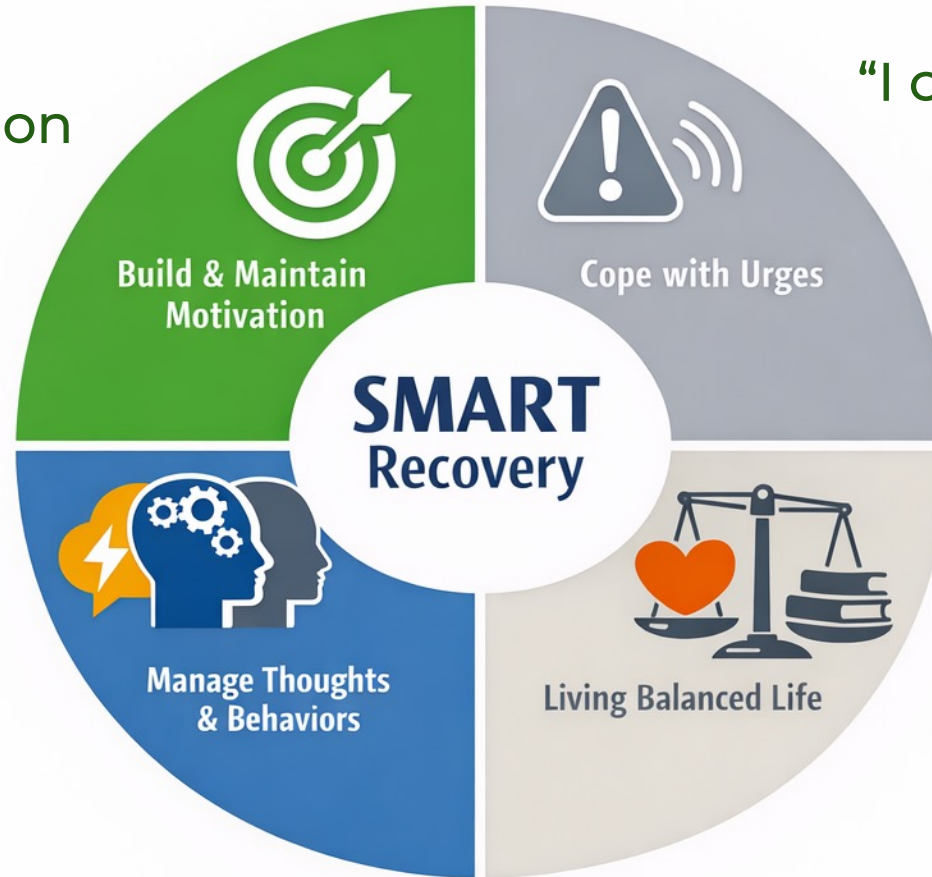
Global Survey: Recovery goals

Total abstinence; never use again	34%
Total abstinence; but realize a slip is possible	30%
Occasional use when urges strongly felt	18.4%
Controlled use	7.3%
Temporary abstinence	3.6%



SMART Recovery 4-points

“I have built and maintained motivation to change”



“I can cope with urges”

“I can manage thoughts, feelings, & behaviors in an effective way without addictive behaviors”

“I live a balanced, positive, and healthy life”

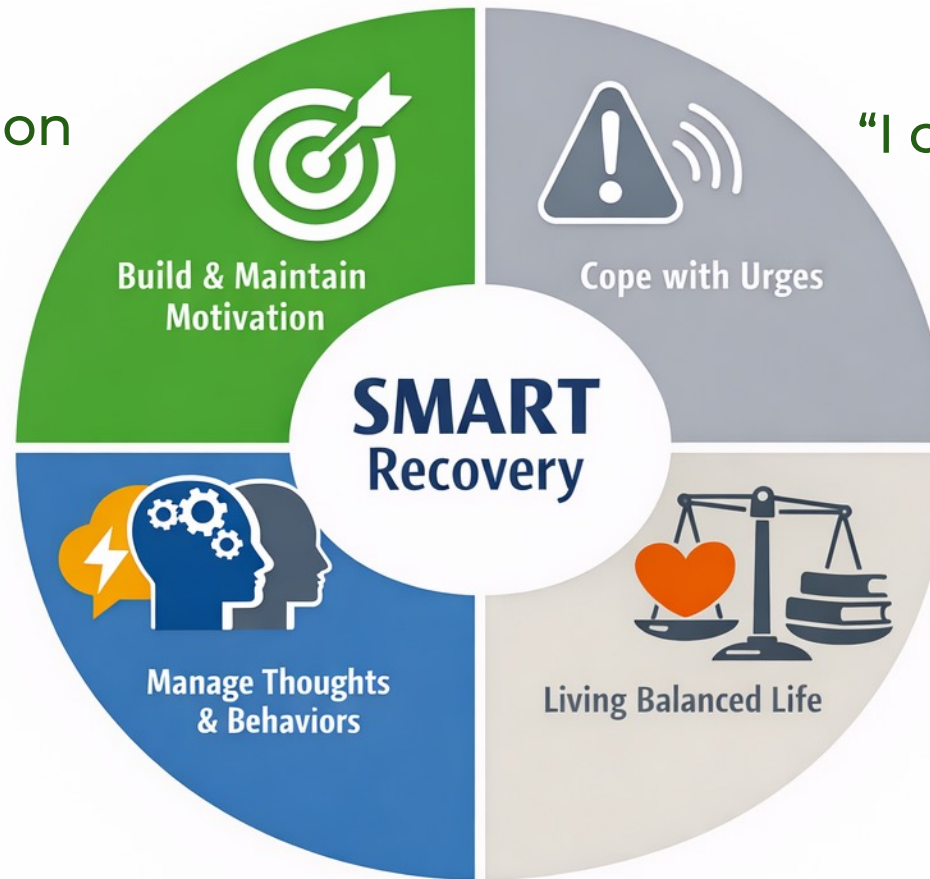
1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)

63%

“I have built and maintained motivation to change”

62%

“I can manage thoughts, feelings, & behaviors in an effective way without addictive behaviors”



59%

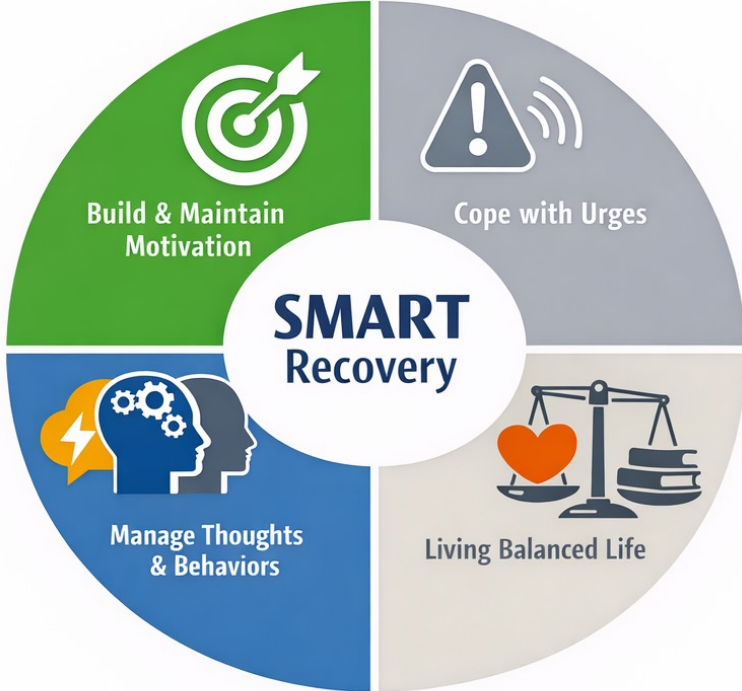
“I can cope with urges”

62%

“I live a balanced, positive, and healthy life”

% of people who “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed”

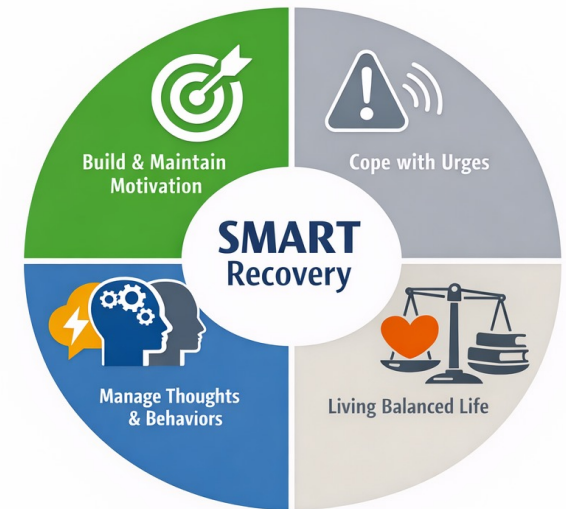
Predicting: function across 4-points



Predicting: function across 4-points



Age
No legal involvement
Abstinence goals
Higher number of groups



Predicting: function across 4-points

Strongest predictor:
Satisfaction



Age
No legal involvement
Abstinence goals
Higher number of groups



Global Survey:
“3 most important reasons you attend SMART”

1. Following a recovery lifestyle

2. Bonding and support

3. Being in a group with people who have had similar experiences to me

“What do you like about attending SMART Recovery.....”

1. Social Support, Connection, Community
2. Science based
3. Culture, Approach, Format

“What do you dislike about attending SMART Recovery.....”

1. Meeting length
2. Lack of availability of meetings
3. “Bad facilitators”

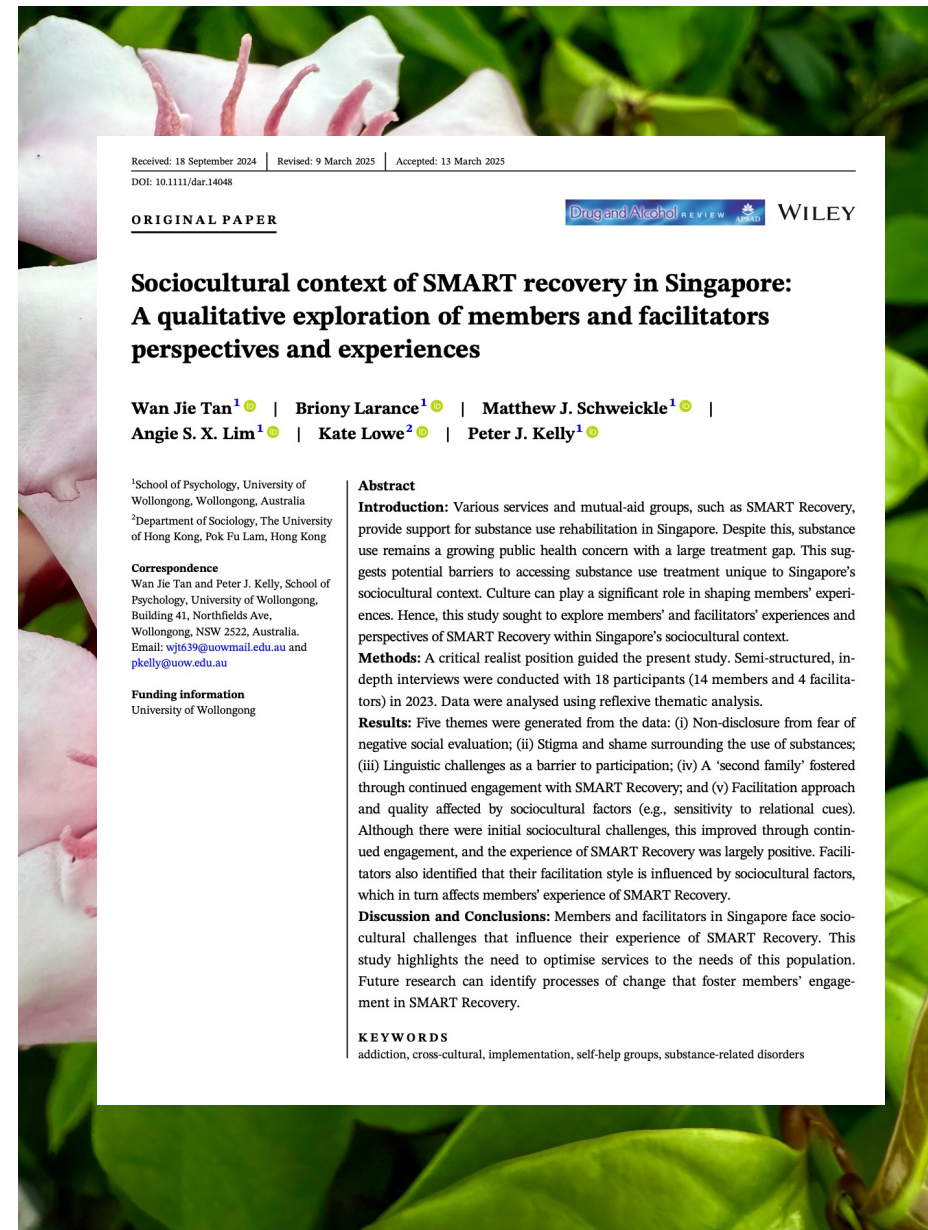
South-east Asia

Kate Tan PhD thesis (in progress)

Cultural utility of mutual support in South-east Asia:

1. Scoping review
2. Sociocultural context of SMART recovery in Singapore

wjt639@uowmail.edu.au



Yarn SMART

- Dr Elizabeth Dale (Clinical PhD)
 - Cultural utility of mutual help groups for Indigenous people:
 1. Systematic review
 2. Cultural utility of SMART Recovery in an Australian Aboriginal context
 3. Delphi study
- edale@uow.edu.au

Dale et al. *Addict Sci Clin Pract* (2021) 16:2
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s13722-020-00212-8>

Addiction Science & Clinical Practice

RESEARCH Open Access

A Delphi yarn: applying Indigenous knowledges to enhance the cultural utility of SMART Recovery Australia

Elizabeth Dale^{1,2*}, Katherine M. Conigrave^{3,4}, Peter J. Kelly^{1,2}, Rowena Ivers^{5,6}, Kathleen Clapham⁷ and K. S. Kylie Lee^{3,8}

Abstract

Background: Mutual support groups are a popular treatment for substance use and other addictive behaviours. However, little is known about the cultural utility of these programmes for Indigenous peoples.

Methods: A three-round Delphi study, utilising Indigenous research yarning methods was conducted to: (1) Obtain expert opinion regarding the cultural utility of an Indigenous SMART Recovery handbook; (2) Gain consensus on areas within the SMART Recovery programme that require cultural modification and; (3) Seek advice on how modifications could be implemented in future programme design and delivery. The panellists were 11 culturally, geographically, and professionally diverse Indigenous Australian health and wellbeing experts. A group consensus level of 80% was set prior to each survey round.

Results: There was 100% participant retention across all three Delphi rounds. The panel reached consensus on five key programme modifications (composition of a separate facilitator and group member handbook; culturally appropriate language, terminology, and literacy level; culturally meaningful programme activities; supplementary storytelling resources; and customisation for diverse community contexts). The panel also developed a series of practical implementation strategies to guide SMART Recovery through a modification process.

Conclusion: The findings highlight the importance of involving Indigenous peoples in the design, delivery and validation of mainstream mutual support programmes. Indigenous-led programme modifications could help improve accessibility and usefulness of mutual support groups for Indigenous peoples worldwide. This study is an example of how Indigenous research methods can be used alongside the Delphi technique. This approach demonstrated a way that Indigenous peoples from culturally and geographically diverse locations can participate in research anonymously, autonomously and without added burden on personal, community or professional obligations.

Keywords: Mutual support group, Indigenous, Addiction, Substance use, SMART recovery

Background

Mutual support group programmes are a popular treatment for problems arising from substance use and other behaviours of addiction (e.g. gambling) [1, 2]. Such groups offer non-clinical, community-based meetings that harness experiential knowledge and mobilise member-to-member social, emotional, and informational support [3]. Treatment offered by such programmes is free to attend and offered on an ongoing basis [4].

The most prevalent mutual support group programmes are the 12-step modalities (e.g., Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) Gamblers Anonymous (GA)) and SMART Recovery. Research shows that regular group attendance can

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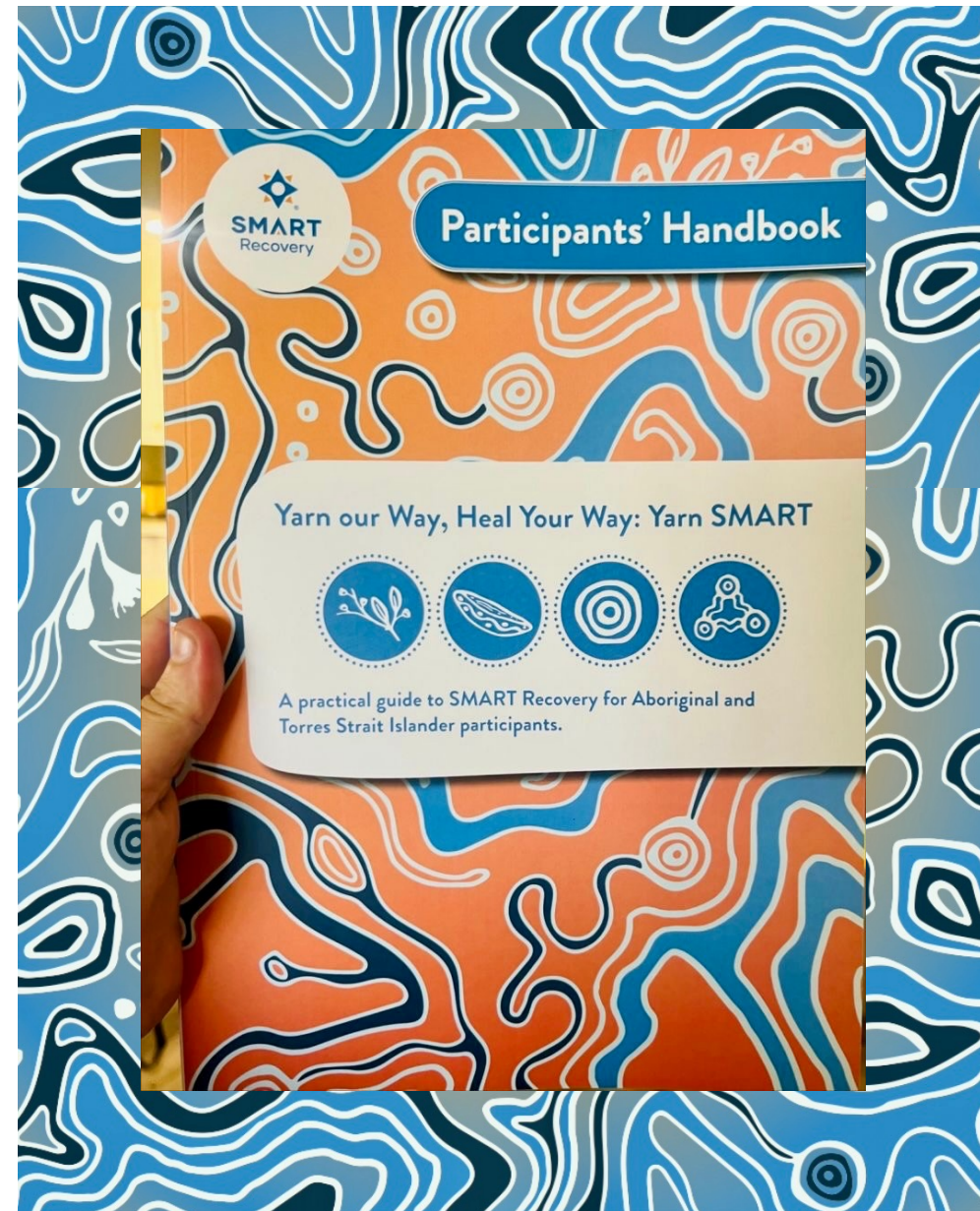


https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MX82F_Qobpw

Yarn SMART

- Over 100 people trained in Yarn SMART
- Over 30 groups currently available across Australia

<https://smartrecoveryaustralia.com.au/yarn-smart-training>



Takeaway Messages

SMART Recovery is having global impact

Keep listening to facilitators and people attending the groups

Keep evolving SMART Recovery as the evidence evolves

Thank you

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