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Media Release (AUS)

Don't be a blind drunk this JulEye

The Australian and New Zealand Eye Foundation (ANZEF) has recently launched its newest JulEye campaign, reminding all Australians of the eye health risks associated with excessive drinking.

Alcohol is associated with more than 150,000 hospitalisations every year¹, with eye injuries making up a portion of these, either through accidents, violence or forgetfulness.

Ophthalmologist and JulEye spokesperson, Dr Chameen Samarawickrama (*Shar-meen Samara-wick-rama*), treats many of these patients and finds the most common injuries are trauma to the eyeball and eye socket fractures.

The Australian Government's 2019-2028 National Alcohol Strategy tells us that among recent drinkers, 6.7% had injured themselves or someone else because of their drinking in their lifetime and 2.3% had done so in the last 12 months².

"There are well established connections between excessive drinking and anti-social behaviour, which can lead to black eyes, fractured eye sockets and permanent loss of vision," Dr Samarawickrama said.

"But it's not just excessive drinking that can cause damage to eyesight.

"I commonly see patients who have had a couple of drinks and forgotten to remove their contact lenses before going to sleep.

"Leaving contacts in overnight creates risks such as infection, ulcers and permanent damage to vision.

"It's these seemingly inconsequential decisions that people make while under the influence of alcohol that can have life-changing consequences."

But it's not all bad news. Australians are reducing their alcohol intake in response to better understanding the risk factors involved³. Healthy men and women should drink no more than 10 standard drinks a week and no more than 4 standard drinks on any one day. The less you drink, the lower your risk of harm from alcohol⁴.

"The next time you're having a drink, think of your eyes and don't end up a blind drunk," Dr Samarawickrama said.

If you think you might be drinking too much, support is available at <https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/alcohol/alcohol-contacts>.

JulEye is the awareness raising month of the Australian and New Zealand Eye Foundation (ANZEF).

For more information about the Foundation, please visit www.anzef.com.

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¹ Gao, C., Ogeil, R.P., & Lloyd, B. (2014). Alcohol's burden of disease in Australia. Canberra: FARE and VicHealth in collaboration with Turning Point

² <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/11/national-alcohol-strategy-2019-2028.pdf>

³ <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/11/national-alcohol-strategy-2019-2028.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/health-advice/alcohol#download>