

## AA, addiction and the Professor

Addiction psychiatrist and University of Sydney professor, Stephen Jurd, has put his practice on hold to produce the off-Broadway hit [Bill W and Dr Bob](#) at Sydney's CarriageWorks theatre.



'Bill W and Dr Bob' tells the story of the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The play which runs from 9 to 17 July tells the story of the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), the internationally acclaimed mutual-help program designed for recovery from alcoholism.

Dr Jurd who uses the principles of AA (and other 12 step programs) in his clinic to help patients said he was "excited and honoured" to be involved in the Australian premiere.

"The founding of AA is a deeply moving, funny and insightful story that not only explores the relationship between the two men that established the support group, but also demonstrates the redemptive power that drives recovery from alcoholism," he said.

While most people drink responsibly and consuming alcohol is a socially acceptable activity in Australia, for some it has "devastating health and social effects", says Jurd.

### **A disease that can strike a person at any age**

"Alcoholism can affect a person's entire circle of family and friends," states Jurd. "It is a disease that can strike people at any age. It's certainly not a disease that is specific to older men.

"At the moment we as a society are debating the legal age for drinking. Should it be raised to 21? Young Australians are starting to drink at an earlier age, and many drink in a way that puts their health and others' at risk.

"How we manage the disease of alcoholism and its inevitable costs to an individual and society is paramount."

Alcohol consumption has been linked to a wide range of health conditions including cirrhosis of the liver, inflammation of the gut and pancreas, heart and circulatory problems, sleep disorders, male impotency, eye diseases and bleeding disorders.

### **Increased chances of cancer**

Research has also shown that alcohol consumption also raises the overall risk of cancer, including cancer of the mouth, throat and oesophagus, breast cancer and bowel cancer.

Consumption of alcohol affects concentration, coordination and judgment, and slows response time to unexpected situations. Alcohol consumption also increases the risk of mental illness, such as depression, people who are prone to these conditions.

There is also a high co-morbidity between alcohol misuse and the misuse of other drugs, with consistent patterns in the uptake of polydrug use among those treated for alcohol problems.

The play was written by Samuel Shem, author of the classic medical novels *The House of God* and *Moon and Misery*, which have sold over three million copies, and Janet Surrey, a clinical psychologist widely published in the fields of substance abuse and relational psychotherapy. Samuel Shem will attend the Australian premiere of his play.

Source: University of Sydney

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