



**Know the Truth™
PREVENTION PROGRAM
EFFECTIVENESS STUDY**

Know the Truth™ (KTT) is a substance abuse prevention program that has been operated by Minnesota Adult

and Teen Challenge since 2006. The KTT program, which is intended for adolescents and teens in grades 6-12, aims to complement school substance use curriculum by promoting healthy attitudes toward drugs and alcohol and increasing awareness about the physical, social, and emotional risks associated with substance use. It pursues these goals through education, interactive exercises (i.e. role playing), and shared firsthand experiences of young people who have struggled with substance use and abuse. This study was conducted to measure effectiveness of the KTT program on youth attitudes related to drugs and alcohol.

ABOUT THE PRESENTERS

All KTT program facilitators have firsthand experience with drug and/or alcohol use and abuse. They are close in age to the students they speak to in the schools. Age proximity between presenters and students creates a peer to peer format which allows students to relate to the presenters while viewing them as experts on the subject of substance use and abuse.

BACKGROUND

Attitudes regarding substance use and abuse can be formative for young people, influencing decision-making and the likelihood of future substance use.¹ Peer pressure and peer conformity, for example, can significantly predict

¹ Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (2005). The influence of attitudes on behavior. *The handbook of attitudes*, 173(221), 31.

future risky behaviors, including substance use.² Favorable or positive attitudes toward drugs and drug use among young people are also significant risk factors that can be predictive of future drug use, particularly the misuse of prescription drugs.³ Thus, prevention programs that address these risk factors are more likely to be effective in drug prevention efforts.⁴

ABOUT THE STUDY

Rob Stewart, M.A., an independent evaluator and University of Minnesota Ph.D. candidate conducted an evaluation of the KTT program during the 2017-2018 academic school year. The study design was a pre-test/post-test, nonrandom quasi-experimental design including both Control and Test groups. Surveys were taken anonymously with a numeric coding system to match the pre-test with the post-test surveys. Students from two Minneapolis-area high schools were recruited for participation; in total 366 students participated in the study. Study participants included students enrolled in health classes during the fall semester at their respective high schools. The Control group included students who participated in the standard health education curriculum only. The Test group included students who participated in a KTT two-session curriculum in addition to the

² Santor, D. A., Messervey, D., & Kusumakar, V. (2000). Measuring peer pressure, popularity, and conformity in adolescent boys and girls: Predicting school performance, sexual attitudes, and substance abuse. *Journal of youth and adolescence*, 29(2), 163-182. (<https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1023/A:1005152515264.pdf>)

³ Sung, H. E., Richter, L., Vaughan, R., Johnson, P. B., & Thom, B. (2005). Nonmedical use of prescription opioids among teenagers in the United States: Trends and correlates. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 37(1), 44-51.

⁴ Hawkins, J. D., Catalano, R. F., & Miller, J. Y. (1992). Risk and protective factors for alcohol and other drug problems in adolescence and early adulthood: implications for substance abuse prevention. *Psychological bulletin*, 112(1), 64.

standard health education curriculum. The “standard” drug and alcohol curriculum was delivered by the school’s health teacher with content aligned with the National Health Education Standards and Minnesota Benchmarks. The KTT curriculum was delivered by KTT facilitators on two consecutive days of the health class. The primary evaluation question is whether the addition of the KTT program is effective in encouraging healthier attitudes toward drugs and drug use than the standard health curriculum on its own.

HIGHLIGHTS

- *Students in both the Control and Test groups reported net positive shifts in overall healthy attitudes toward drugs, drug use, and the risks associated with drug use. However, the Test group reported a significantly larger net positive shift. Nearly one in four students in the Test group (24%) reported an overall increase in healthy attitudes, while only about one in twelve students in the Control group (8%) reported an increase.*

Prescription Drugs (opioids), Attitudes & Use

- *Regarding prescription pills including opioids, the Test group had a larger net increase in the number of students who reported healthier attitudes toward prescription drugs after participation (54%) compared to the Control group (18%).*
- *The Test group more than doubled the Control group in identifying the risks associated with using prescription drugs.*
- *50% of students from the Test group stated it would be wrong for them to use prescription pills (i.e. opiates) vs. 29% from the Control group.*
- *58% of students from the Test group stated it would be wrong for them to use illegal drugs vs 40% from the Control group.*

OTHER OUTCOMES

- *Students in the Test group who reported prior substance use in the pre-test survey reported a decrease in substance use in the post-test survey.*
- *Students who participated in the Test group perceived drugs and alcohol as more harmful than those in the Control group.*
- *When asked about what their friends would think if they used substances, respondents from both groups reported that they think it would be wrong.*