EVIDENCE OF THE ROLE OF CCTV IN PREVENTING ALCOHOL-RELATED ASSAULTS IN A NIGHT TIME ECONOMY

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SB Pointing*. *James Cook University, Cairns, Queensland, Australia*

Background The number and severity of injuries caused by alcohol-related violence in inner-city entertainment areas is an ongoing concern. Despite continued public investment in CCTV, most previous research has indicated CCTV has little effect in reducing the number of these assaults or associated disorder.

Purpose This paper builds on a recent publication in *Injury Prevention* and presents research conducted as part of a broader community-based study aiming to reduce alcohol-related assaults in the night-time economy of Cairns, Australia.

Methods Semi-structured interviews, focus groups and observational sessions in the Camera Room. Footage from 30 cases of assault was examined. A Realist Evaluation framework was used to examine CCTV operations and assault *outcomes*.

Results CCTV operators directed private security who intervened in 40% (n=12) of assaults, limiting possible injury. This included three incidents judged as preventable. A further five (17%) assault incidents were also potentially preventable. The remainder (43%) happened too quickly for intervention. Salient aspects of the *context* of the CCTV system were defined, and relevant *mechanisms* within the camera room and the real-time communication network were postulated or identified.

Significance Intervention points within these mechanisms are offered for testing, and an assault-related cost-benefit analysis of the CCTV system is presented. These findings are then situated within the overall research programme. This may progress the debate about the effectiveness of CCTV systems in limiting injuries from alcohol-fuelled community violence, and address calls for more sophisticated techniques to evaluate CCTV's effectiveness.