Comparative Study and Evaluation of SCRAM Use, Recidivism Rates, and Characteristics

2-Page Brief of NHTSA's Published study, April 2015

In 2010, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) began a study to look more in-depth at the impact of SCRAM Continuous Alcohol Monitoring® (SCRAM CAM™) on DUI offender recidivism. The study focused on two jurisdictions in Wisconsin and Nebraska, and study participants were those with offenses occurring between 2007 and 2009.

The study looked at recidivism two years post-monitoring. In April of 2015, NHTSA released the results in Comparative Study and Evaluation of SCRAM Use, Recidivism Rates, and Characteristics.

Below is a review of the key takeaways from the study. Overall, the results were positive, showing a direct correlation between SCRAM monitoring and behavior change. NHTSA also identified some limitations within the study design and recommended further study to truly isolate the impact of just CAM on behavior, versus CAM combined with a variety of other program parameters and requirements.

Background

- Data from more than 3,000 DWI offenders in two states—WI (pretrial) and NE (post-conviction)—were studied to ascertain the impact of CAM on rates and speed of recidivism. In total, 1,509 offenders wore CAM (837 in WI, 672 in NE).
- SCRAM CAM was the only technology used in this study.
- Definition of recidivism: Rates of recidivism were established by looking at rearrests for alcohol-driving offenses occurring after the first eligible arrest (target offense) in 2007 to 2009. A fixed, two-year "look forward" interval was used to determine if a subject recidivated (alcohol-driving offense).
- Researchers controlled for extraneous factors and matched CAM and non-CAM offenders on: county of conviction; number of prior offenses; sex; age at time of target offense; and number of days since last prior (where applicable).
- Time spent on CAM after the target offense averaged 86 days (85 in WI, 87 in NE).

Key Findings

- Recidivists assigned to CAM took an average of 107 more days to recidivate than non-CAM recidivists (WI: 360 days for CAM, 271 days for non-CAM; NE: 458 days for CAM, 333 days for non-CAM).
- Being assigned to CAM delayed recidivism by 36% in WI and 43% in NE (among those who did recidivate).
- Less than 2% (WI: 14 out of 837; NE: 1 out of 672) of CAM users recidivated while on the device.
- Assignment to CAM for at least 90 days was associated with a 113% decreased risk of recidivism (NE only)
- Those results are consistent with a preliminary study published by the National Center for State Courts in 2009 and the National Drug Court Institute in 2010 showing that the longer on CAM, the lower the rate of recidivism. *(Flango and Cheesman)*
- The overall rates of recidivism were higher among CAM users than non-CAM users (WI: 7.6% for CAM, 6.2% for non-CAM; NE: 9.8% for CAM, 7.7% for non-CAM). NHTSA determined neither of these were statistically significant.

Limitations of the Study

- The study identified a correlation between CAM use and recidivism, but did not identify causation. Other factors caused the higher rate of re-offense.
- Assignment to CAM:
    - Offenders were not randomly assigned to SCRAM, and NHTSA surmised that the overall recidivism rates could be a function of the offenders themselves
    - Officials generally assign higher-risk offenders who are more likely to recidivate to CAM

Key Takeaways

- CAM is an effective tool when monitoring alcohol sobriety for DWI offenders.
- Being assigned to CAM delays the onset of recidivism.
- While wearing CAM, recidivism rates were extremely low (less than 2%).
- Wearing CAM for at least 90 days was associated with a significant decreased risk of recidivism (113% in NE).

Summary Quotes From Study:

- "The NE CAM program is most often used in conjunction with substance abuse treatment, and both treatment and probation personnel feel that treatment will be more effective if the offenders are sober." (Page 25)
- "The crucial finding is that being assigned to SCRAM delayed the onset of recidivism." (Page 26)
- "The finding that, among recidivists, SCRAM users take more days to recidivate than non-SCRAM users is important and suggests that CAM devices do have a beneficial effect." (Page 26)
- "Further research using a longitudinal design that includes random assignment to CAM would be needed to precisely isolate the impact of the device on recidivism." (Page 26)
- "CAM has been shown to be an effective tool when monitoring alcohol sobriety for DWI offenders. CAM identifies all confirmed alcohol events and eliminates the need for probation or other court officers to conduct frequent and random in-home offender monitoring. This aspect of offender monitoring saves time and resources (manpower and fiscal) for other types of monitoring and probation efforts." (Page 26)
- "It also appears that offenders who maintain sobriety while undergoing treatment have better treatment outcomes." (Page 26)