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THE PREVALENCE OF ALCOHOL USE AMONG MEDICAL STUDENTS IN POLAND

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Abstract

Introduction. Alcohol is the most widely used drug worldwide. Medical students should be aware of its possible harmful properties although they are known to consume large amounts of alcohol. Therefore analysis of their drinking patterns is important for public health.

Aim of the study. Analysis of alcohol consumption patterns among Polish medical universities students.

Material and methods. Students of different Polish medical universities were asked to fill a self-prepared survey on alcohol consumption. 852 fulfilled questionnaires were gathered. The statistical analysis was performed with Statistica 13 (Statsoft, USA).

Results. 99.19% of students (N=860) have declared trying alcohol. 35,35% (N=304) of respondents declared the age of first alcohol consumption as between 15 and 18 years. 31,28% (N=269) of respondents admitted drinking once a week, (27,33%, N=235) twice a week. Beer was pointed as the most frequently consumed alcohol – (51,28%, N=441). 241 students (28,02%) admitted participating in classes under the influence of alcohol.

Conclusions. Study reveals some risky alcohol drinking behavior, for example attending classes under the influence of alcohol. During classes they often have contact with patients therefore it can be really dangerous tendency.

Keywords: alcohol drinking trends, medical students

Introduction

Recent figures from the World Health Organization (WHO) demonstrate that the European Region (E.U.) is the heaviest drinking region in the world (1). Alcohol is still the most widely used drug worldwide. And it is still really often consumed during studies. Most researches show that studies are time of excessive consumption of alcohol, with increasing emphasis on binge drinking (2,3). Reducing drinking during late adolescence is likely to be important for preventing long-term adverse consequences as well as protecting against more immediate harms (4). Medical students should be aware of its possible harmful properties although they are known to consume large amounts of alcohol. Therefore, analysis of their drinking ways is important for public health. In our study we investigated alcohol consumption patterns among medical students of Polish universities.

Material and methods

A self-prepared questionnaire involving questions about alcohol consumption was presented on Facebook groups of various faculties and medical universities.

The survey consisted of 2 parts — alcohol and general information. A total 30 questions were to be asked by respondents — 21 and 9 in two consecutive parts. The survey was prepared as an online form. Respondents were asked to fulfil the forms via Facebook groups associated with their studies. The study was anonymous and voluntary. Respondents received no financial gratification for their effort. The data was collected during May and June 2016. 860 fulfilled questionnaires were gathered.

Questions: The first part was composed of question about alcohol and its consumption. Respondents were asked if they have ever drunk an alcohol. For those who answered affirmatively following questions were composed. Group of ever drinkers were asked about age of first alcohol consumption, frequency of drinking and type of alcohol which they preferred. The next questions concerned about frequency of drinking particular types of alcohol, all types which were consumed in last 3 months and quantity consuming once and on a regular bases. Another questions treated about frequency of being hangover and situation when it exists. Last questions in this part concerned about participating in risky situation after drinking alcohol, and some questions about basic information about alcohol. The third group

of questions (general information) was composed of sex, age, mass and height. Respondents were asked about their faculty, name of university and voivodeship in which it is placed.

The survey was targeted at students of various degrees of all Polish medical universities. All respondent were asked for university affiliation. To provide wide spectrum of respondents as well as credibility of data invitation to take part in the study was posted on closed Facebook groups. To avoid random answers in the analysis all the data was analysed and a very small number of suspicious or duplicate answers was removed.

Statistical analysis of collected data was performed using Statistica® 13 (StatSoft, USA). Compute tables were used.

Socio-demography of the group consisted of 860 respondents, who were during studying on polish medical universities. About three fourths (73,02%, N=628) of respondents were women. The average age of students was 21,99±1,85 years. Over 70% (74,88%, N=640) comes from 3 voivodeships: Lublin, Mazowian and Kuyavian-Pomeranian voivodeship, the most from Mazowian voivodeship. Most of them were students of Medical University of Warsaw (27,79%, N=239). At Medical University of Lublin studied almost 15% of respondents (13,37%, N=115). About half of the respondents declared studying at medical faculty (49,07%, N=422). The rest of respondents studied at dentistry (6,04%, N=52), midwifery (4,03%, N=37), nursery (5,81%, N=50), pharmacy (5,69%, N=49), public health (2,79%, N=24), biotechnology (1,28%, N=11) faculties.

Results

Over 99% (99,19%, N=853) of respondents have ever drunk an alcohol. 7 of respondents have never tried an alcohol.

More than half of the respondents declared the age of first alcohol consumption between the age of 15 and 18 (51,28%, N=441). The other respondents firstly consumed alcohol before the age of 15 (35,35%, N=304), between 18 and 21(12,21%, N=105) and later (0,35%, N=3). 31,28% (N=269) of respondents declared drinking once a week. More than one fourth (27,33%, N=235) declared alcohol consumption once two weeks. The remaining 40% drink every day, every two days, once a month, rather than once a month — 1,28% (N=11), 7,55% (N=66), 13,60% (N=117), 18,14% (N=156) respectively. This data is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondents' frequency of drinking alcohol

Frequency	Amount	Percentage (%)
Every day	11	1,27
Every two days	65	7,56
Once a week	269	31,28
Once two week	235	27,33
Once a month	156	18,14
Rather than once a month	117	13,6

The most frequent consumed alcohol was beer with frequency over 50% (51,28%, N=441). Relatively often red wine (15%, N=129), vodka (11,51%, N=99) and white wine (10,35%, N=89) was drunk. Beer consumers consumed it usually at least once a month but less than once a week (39,77%, N=372) with quantity 1 – 2 bottles/cans (61,97%, N=533). Only 8 respondents declared drinking it every day (0,93%). White wine and vodka are rather less often consumed – less than once a month, 48,95%, 61,86% of their consumers respectively.

Even 241 students (28,02%) admitted participating in classes under the influence of alcohol. 59 of them (24,48%) pointed that it has happened in last year, 27 (11,2%) in last year. Detailed data is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Participating in classes under the influence of alcohol

Opinion	Amount	Percentage (%)
never	612	71,16
ever:	241	28,02
- last month	27	3,14
- last three months	15	1,74
- last six months	16	1,86
- last year	59	6,86
- over a year ago	124	14,42

Although almost 85% (84,19%, N=724) declared that has never left classes because of being under the influence of alcohol, 10 respondents (1,16%) admitted that it took place in last month. Almost 10% of medical university students declared driving after drinking alcohol (8,02%, N=69). These students claim that it has happened in last month, in last six month, in last year, over a year ago – respectively 10,14% (N=7), 2,9% (N=2), 13,04% (N=9), 73,91% (N=51) respectively of medical university students who declared driving under the influence of alcohol. This data is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Driving under the influence of alcohol

Opinion	Amount	Percentage (%)
never	784	91,16
ever:	69	8,02
- last month	7	0,81
- last six months	2	0,23
- last year	9	1,04
- over a year ago	51	5,93

Even 245 respondents (28,49%) admitted leaving classes because of being hangover, 52 declared that this situation took place during last year (6,07%). Although over one third declares being hangover (39,19%, N=337) during last month. Over one tenth claims that has never been hangover (13,37%, N=115). What is more, only 43,26% of respondents has never been hangover during classes. Remainder group participated in classes hangover in different frequency – last month (8,37%, N=72), last three months (6,51%, N=56), last six months (6,51%, N=56), last year (13,02, N=112), over last year ago (43,35%, N=372). This data is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Participating in classes being hangover

Opinion	Amount	Percentage (%)
never	372	43,26
ever:	481	55,93
- last month	72	8,37
- last three months	56	6,51
- last six months	56	6,51
- last year	112	13,02
- over a year ago	185	21,51

Almost 10% (9,18%, N=79) of respondents participated in fight after drinking alcohol. Almost 5% (6,28%, N=54) of medical university students who fulfilled this research survey thinks that it is not possible to get addicted to alcohol by drinking only beer.

Discussion

Many researches shows that studying is the time of excessive consumption of alcohol [3,5,6]. Research suggests that students today drink more than in previous ages, with increasing emphasis on binge drinking and drunkenness than among earlier generations [2,3]. Lorant at all shows in their research conducted on Belgian colleges that on average each student has 1.7 drinks a day and 2.8 episodes of abusive drinking a month. Their study shows that abusive drinking increased with the period attending the college, whereas it decreased with age [6]. Risky behaviour after alcohol consumption is really often. It contains risky sexual behaviour [8], mixing alcohols with different substances [9]. Merill at all' study shows that in France almost 40% of students drinkers reported alcohol induced memory loss, such as blackouts [10].

Taking into consideration this data Lorant at all suggest that university authorities need to acknowledge to commit themselves to support an environment of responsible drinking [6]. Reducing drinking during late adolescence is likely to be important for preventing long-term adverse consequences as well as protecting against more immediate harms [4].

The very high consumption of alcohol among students of medical universities is really alarming tendency. Apart from drinking alcohol, there are very often risky behaviours attracted by the consumption of alcohol in this group of students. They participate in fights, and what is really irresponsible drive car under the influence of alcohol. Some of them declared participating in classes being hangover or even being under the influence of alcohol. Two aspects should be taken into consideration. Participating in classes under the influence of alcohol can be really dangerous for patients with whom they can contact during classes in hospital. Another issue concerns being an example how to behave for other students and people.

Medical students should be the source of knowledge of health benefits behaviour. By behaving contrary to the norms they have assumed, they will not be a bad model of behaviour for students of other fields of study, and for other people who often set them as it because of being future physicians.

Conclusion

Study reveals some risky alcohol drinking behaviour among medical students, for example attending classes under the influence of alcohol, participating classes being hangover, leaving classes because of being under the influence of alcohol or being hangover.

During classes, they often have contact with patients therefore it can be really dangerous tendency. Medical students are often referred to be a role models for health and pro-health behaviour, and because they should provide responsible drinking patterns and encourage others to do the same. University authorities need to acknowledge to commit themselves to support an environment of responsible drinking.

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