

Alcohol admissions and health inequalities: is the tide finally turning?

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**SHAAP/SARN 'Alcohol Occasional' Seminar
Monday 27th February 2017, The Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh**

Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems (SHAAP) and the Scottish Alcohol Research Network (SARN) are proud to support the lunchtime 'Alcohol Occasional' seminars which showcase new and innovative research on alcohol use. All of the seminars are run in conjunction with the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh. These events provide the chance for researchers, practitioners, policy makers and members of the public to hear about new alcohol-related topics and discuss and debate implications for policy and practice. The current theme for the seminars is "Alcohol and Health Inequalities". Briefing papers, including this one, aim to capture the main themes and to communicate these to a wider audience. SHAAP is fully responsible for the contents, which are our interpretation.

Martin presented the findings of a quantitative research on alcohol-specific hospital admissions (ASHAs), from 2006 to 2015, covering 326 local authorities in England. The study used the data to try to explore how inequalities vary over time, by condition, gender and geographic region. The research looked at the impact of inequalities on the health care system.

Martin explained that, according to the findings, there was an increase in alcohol-specific admissions over



the period, with larger increases from older groups, with a good proportion of women, coming from less deprived areas. The data also suggested a different picture between the start and the finish of the research period, with men representing a smaller increase in the admission rate 34% vs. 43% for women. However, during 2014-2015 the admissions rates were considerably higher for men, i.e. 816 per 100,000, and that this accounted for 68% of the total number.

According to the study findings, men aged between 40 and 64 accounted for the majority of admissions, while people aged over 65 had the lowest admission rate. The relative threat to resources from both men and women under 40 seemed to be quite small. Men older than 65 and

women aged between 40 and 64 could be seen as broadly comparable in terms of hospital admissions. The figures suggested an increase in the number of women older than 65 being admitted, but their rates are still the lowest. Admissions rates of people younger than 40 reduced from 35% in 2006/2007 to 26% in 2014/2015.

Martin discussed the impact of these figures on NHS resources, i.e. the costs associated with the admissions. He explained that the organisation and provision of healthcare services contribute to an estimated one-third of the improvement in the population's life expectancy, while two-thirds of improvements have been attributed to public health activities aimed at changing people's lifestyle behaviours.

While life expectancy has increased through public health efforts, so have the demands on services that deal with chronic diseases associated with old age. He explained that although his study had only focused on age and gender, it could have also looked into ethnicity, sexual orientation or mental health and come up with a whole new dimension of inequalities. He concluded his talk by suggesting that the data could also be used for qualitative analysis comparing different groups.

The discussion with the audience included comments about how the research findings seemed to indicate that the alcohol-related admissions decreased during the recent recession period, This supports arguments that price related interventions, such as minimum unit pricing for alcohol could be an effective tool to reduce consumption.

Discussants also talked about how the study findings seemed to indicate that the number of alcohol admissions for women could eventually become similar to those for men, and that the same could happen with older people in relation to the younger. It was agreed, however, that, overall, men are still the greatest cause for concern.

It was suggested that although the research looked into alcohol-related data, we should have in mind that many of the patients in question would also have further health problems caused by other unhealthy lifestyles, including smoking, obesity – and by poverty itself. It was also remarked that A&E services do not necessarily record that incidents are alcohol related, but that this is normally the case when people are hospitalised.

Concluding comments included a statement that while alcohol draws A&E resources, it is good that people seek and receive medical treatment for alcohol problems. There was also the suggestion that licensing and other intervention activities have been facilitating a decrease of alcohol-related admissions and crime over time, and that control of alcohol marketing and the introduction of the minimum unit price would also be beneficial for the health of the population.

The session ended with Martin's suggestion that the same data could be used by other types of research to provide reliable, robust evidence to back interventions.

Upcoming event series



**WOMEN AND ALCOHOL
EDINBURGH AND LONDON-BASED
SEMINAR SERIES, 2017**

Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems (SHAAP) and the Institute of Alcohol Studies (IAS) are co-hosting a four part seminar series to discuss issues relating to women and alcohol. Each session will be chaired by an eminent academic, who will invite three guest speakers to present their personal responses to three pre-set questions, which are relevant to the topic. These events will provide an opportunity for policy makers, academics, activists, and media representatives to critically discuss topics related to women and alcohol use. The intention is to stimulate thinking, challenge some attitudes and perceptions, and to think about future research and policy priorities. A summary of the discussions from the seminars will be collated into a report, which will be disseminated after the events.

Seminar 1: Women, Alcohol, and Globalisation.
Royal College of Physicians, London, 2 – 4pm, Friday, 10th March 2017

Chair: Dr. Cecile Knai, Associate Professor of Public Health Policy, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

- How does alcohol marketing influence women's behaviours?
- How does alcohol marketing influence attitudes towards women?
- How does alcohol affect women in different social and cultural contexts?

Seminar 2: Women, Alcohol, and Empowerment.
Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh, 2 – 4pm, Friday, 7th April 2017

Chair: Professor Dorothy Newbury Birch, Professor of Alcohol and Public Health, Teesside University.

- What role does alcohol play in the empowerment of women?
- What drinking choices do women in leadership roles have?
- What responsibilities do women in leadership roles have in relation to alcohol?

Seminar 3: Women, Alcohol, and Stigma.
Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh, 2 – 4pm, Friday, 9th June 2017

Chair: Dr. Judith MacKay, Professor of Public Health & Primary Care, University of Hong Kong.

- Should certain women not drink?
- Functioning alcoholic: The modern woman?
- Women on women: Our own worst enemies?

Seminar 4: Women and Alcohol: What's next?
Royal College of Physicians, London, 2 - 4pm, Friday, 15th September 2017

Chair: Dr. Sally Marlow, Public Engagement Fellow, Kings College London.

- How will women be affected by alcohol in the future?
- How can alcohol-related harms to women be prevented and/or reduced?
- How do we strike a balance between individual responsibility and state intervention?

Attendance is by invitation only. If you would like to attend, please send your request to Victoria Troy: V.Troy@rcpe.ac.uk

SHAAP  IAS 

Forthcoming Occasionals

Our next events in the current series of Alcohol Occasionals will be:

Alcohol problems in criminal justice settings: an opportunity not to be missed

Dr Lesley Graham, Clinical Lead for Alcohol, Drugs and Health in Justice Settings, ISD Scotland

13th March 2017

Drinking in pregnancy: a comparison between areas of high and low deprivation in Scotland

Dr Andrew Symon, Senior Lecturer, Mother and Infant Research Unit, University of Dundee

11th May 2017

Alcohol Deaths in Glasgow 2010. Has Service Redesign had an Impact?

Dr Catherine Chiang, NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde

14th June 2017

These events are popular and places are limited. We need you to confirm if you would like to attend. You can do this by registering via EventBrite through our website at www.shaap.org.uk/events.html