

## Screening of the past alcohol users according to AUDIT: A cross-sectional study in an urban slum of Meerut

Katyal R, Bansal R, Goel K, Sharma S

### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Alcohol ranks eighth among global risk factors for death, while it is the third leading global risk factor for disease and disability.

**Aim:** To know the various socio-demographic factors related to quitting alcohol among the past users.

**Method:** A community based cross-sectional study was conducted in an urban slum of Meerut among 324 adult alcoholics, among whom 15 were past users. Data was collected by home visit using WHO questionnaire (AUDIT: Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test) along with other questions related to the type, initiation and reason behind alcohol use in the current and past drinkers.

**Results:** One third of the drinkers confirmed the reason of drinking due to peer pressure while 13.3% rationalized the habit to their social status. Most important reason for quitting the habit was due to resulting ailments.

**Conclusion:** Peer pressure is one of the most influencing factor related to alcohol use. Therefore, in order to relieve the people from the upcoming rise in non-communicable diseases, it is mandatory to curb the addicting alcohol use by paying heed to the peer group of the adolescents.

**Keywords:** alcohol, peer pressure, WHO, AUDIT

### INTRODUCTION

Alcohol use is increasing in developing countries but reliable data is not available. A study using a multilevel cross-sectional analysis of alcohol consumption from the data of the 1998-1999 Indian National Family Health Survey found that the total prevalence of alcohol use was 19.8% for men and 2.8% for women. Collective review of studies in India show that nearly 30% of man and less than 5% of woman consume alcohol, giving a male: female ratio of 6:1.<sup>1</sup>

Alcohol is the leading risk factor for death in males ages 15–59, mainly due to injuries, violence and cardiovascular diseases. Globally, 6.2% of all male deaths are attributable to alcohol, compared to 1.1% of female deaths. Men also have far greater rates of total burden attributed to alcohol.<sup>2</sup> WHO estimates for the South East Asia countries indicate that one-fourth to one-third of male population drink alcohol.<sup>3</sup> In India, the number of alcohol users in 2005 estimated were 62.5 million, with 17.4% of them (10.6 million) being dependant users.<sup>4</sup>

Apart from health, there are indirect costs linked to a wide variety of social costs- family disruption,

marital disharmony, impact on development of children, deprivation of the family, absenteeism and industrial loss, crime and violence, etc.<sup>5</sup>

Problems of alcohol use in India have attracted the attention of public health policy makers and research workers. Large and nationally representative epidemiological studies on alcohol consumption have not been carried out in India. Keeping the above points in view, the present study was conducted to know the prevalence of alcoholism and the various socio-demographic factors related to it so that the necessary measures can be taken for its prevention

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Study design:** Community based cross-sectional study. **Study Area:** Urban Slum, Multan Nagar in the field practice area of the department of Community Medicine, Subharti Medical College, Meerut. **Study Population:** All adult males residing in the area. **Study Period:** September 2010 to October 2011. **Exclusion criteria:** those who are not permanent residents of Meerut, and all the mentally challenged males were excluded. **Sample size:** Among the 324 users, 15 were found to be past users.

Data was collected by home visit using WHO questionnaire (AUDIT: Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test) as study tool by interviewing each study subject.<sup>6</sup> The AUDIT has been shown to be highly sensitive (80%) and specific (89%) screening instrument.<sup>7</sup> Additional information was obtained on the socio-demographic and other determinants of alcohol use.

## RESULTS

Seven participants who were past drinkers belonged to the age of 15-20 years while 5 belonged to 20-30 years. Of the 15 past drinkers, 13 had quitted for more than 1 year, while the history went back to more than 6 months only in 2 subjects. Among the specific reasons stated for initiation to drinking, peer pressure was cited in a third of the subjects. Two of the past drinker sated that they initiated it in order to conform to the societal status. However, most (40%) gave non-specific reasons like fun, celebration, etc.

The reasons cited for giving away the habit were multiple. However, the most important reason for quitting was due to diseases which compelled them to do so. Other equally important reasons stated were- repentance, looking at the bad consequences, and spiritual reasons.

**Table-1.** Reasons cited for initiation and quitting alcoholism among the past alcohol users

Reasons	No. (%) (n=15)
<b>Reasons for initiation</b>	
Father or relative drinks	1 (6.6)
To confirm to social status or norms	2 (13.3)
Peer Pressure	5 (33.3)
Curiosity to drink	1 (6.6)
Others (fun, celebration, etc)	6 (40)
<b>Reasons for quitting</b>	
Spiritual reasons	3 (20)
Repentance	3 (20)
Looking at the bad consequences	3 (20)
Diseases caused due to this	8 (53.5)
Financial reasons	2 (13.3)
Others	2 (13.3)

## DISCUSSION

In the present study, peer pressure was the most common reason cited for initiation to the habit followed by social reasons. Different studies

blamed peer pressure, an to be sociable as the most common reasons.<sup>8,9</sup> While most of the studies cited social reasons for introduction to alcoholism, few studies have attributed the habit to overcome frustrations and fatigue and tiredness. Still some researchers observed that a significant reason to be a feeling of better performances. Only a few found that in urban setup, getting a better sleep was a common reason behing alcoholics.<sup>10</sup> Whatever, may be the reason, almost all the studies pointed out that alcohol consumption among the past users were always with company and seldom alone.<sup>11,12</sup> Although the reasons cited appears different, they points towards a common etiology i.e., society and friends. Almost none of the studies could observe the consumption alone or in family setup. This would mean that alcoholism is more of a social problem among the adolescents than a personal one.

In the present study, the main reason for quitting alcohol was the adverse effect of alcohol to individual health, followed by repentance and religious ground. Similar reasons were quoted by

## CONCLUSIONS

Alcohol abuse is world-wide social and medical problem. Over the past 30 to 40 years, alcohol consumption has increased in quantity and frequency. The age at which people start drinking has also declined. The population groups at great risk are those undergoing rapid socio-economic and cultural changes; they view alcohol as a symbol of prestige and social status.

## AUTHOR NOTE

Rashmi Katyal, Assistant Professor,

**(Corresponding Author)**

rashmikatyal@gmail.com

Department of Community Medicine,

Rohilkhand Medical College, Bareilly

Rahul Bansal, Professor and head,

Kapil Goel, Assistant Professor,

Sachin Sharma, Associate Professor

Department of Community Medicine, Subharti

Medical College, Meerut

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