Alcohol: The hidden harms

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The size of the problem near you

There were 1.1 million estimated admissions

7.0% of all hospital admissions.

**Total number of admissions by age:** 46% of patients were aged between 55 and 74.
• Only 6% of people with alcohol dependence receive treatment each year\(^1\)

• Those with an illicit drug dependence are ten times more likely to have access to treatment than people with alcohol dependence\(^1\)

• In 2009, under 10% of drinkers had discussed their alcohol consumption with a healthcare professional\(^2\)

1. Alcohol Concern 2010, NHS
2. The Health and Social Care Information Centre 2014
Relative risk of comorbid disease by alcohol consumption

1. White et al. BMJ 2002;325(7357):191
Alcohol misuse damages health

- Heart disease or irregular heartbeat
- Stroke
- Depression and anxiety
- Cancer of the mouth, throat, oesophagus or larynx
- Liver cirrhosis and liver cancer
- High blood pressure
- Breast cancer in women
- Pancreatitis
- Reduced fertility
- Harm to unborn babies
The Alcohol Dependent Patient in your consultation

This is one unit of alcohol...

...and each of these is more than one unit

**AUDIT - PC**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Scoring system</th>
<th>Your score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How often do you have a drink containing alcohol?</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Daily or almost daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monthly or less</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 - 4 times per month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 - 3 times per week</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4+ times per week</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many units of alcohol do you drink on a typical day when you are drinking?</td>
<td>0 - 2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 - 4</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>5 - 6</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>7 - 9</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10+</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>How often during the last year have you found that you were not able to stop drinking once you had started?</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less than monthly</td>
<td>Daily or almost daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often during the last year have you failed to do what was normally expected from you because of your drinking?</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Daily or almost daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less than monthly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has a relative or friend, doctor or other health worker been concerned about your drinking or suggested that you cut down?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes, but not in the last year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes, during the last year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Tool

#### Remaining AUDIT questions

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How often have you had 6 or more units if female, or 8 or more if male, on a single occasion in the last year?</td>
<td>0 Never, 1 Less than monthly, 2 Monthly, 3 Weekly</td>
<td>Daily or almost daily, 4 Daily or almost daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often during the last year have you needed an alcoholic drink in the morning to get yourself going after a heavy drinking session?</td>
<td>0 Never, 1 Less than monthly, 2 Monthly, 3 Weekly</td>
<td>Daily or almost daily, 4 Daily or almost daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often during the last year have you had a feeling of guilt or remorse after drinking?</td>
<td>0 Never, 1 Less than monthly, 2 Monthly, 3 Weekly</td>
<td>Daily or almost daily, 4 Daily or almost daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often during the last year have you been unable to remember what happened the night before because you had been drinking?</td>
<td>0 Never, 1 Less than monthly, 2 Monthly, 3 Weekly</td>
<td>Daily or almost daily, 4 Daily or almost daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you or somebody else been injured as a result of your drinking?</td>
<td>0 No, 1 Yes, but not in the last year, 2 Yes, during the last year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Scoring:** 0 – 7 Lower risk, 8 – 15 Increasing risk, 16 – 19 Higher risk, 20+ Possible dependence
ALCOHOL TREATMENT: COMPETENCY AND COMPLEXITY

Babor TF et al. WHO. 2001 & NICE PH24 & NICE QS11

Lower risk <8

Dependence

Hazardous drinking >8<15

Full AUDIT scores

Harmful

Consider specialist referral

Assess for dependence

Brief intervention

Brief advice

Units per day

2 4 0 5
Increased risk of postoperative harms

• Advanced age

• co-morbid disease  

Always considered

• Alcohol dependence  

seldom considered

Barriers to screening

• Whilst society for the most part accepts alcohol consumption, it simultaneously stigmatises alcohol-related problems.

• This means that patients who are not obviously drunk on a regular basis, but who may nevertheless be drinking more than they should, often miss out on treatment and advice that would help them through the process of surgery.
Hidden Harm = Just 5 u/d increased post surgical morbidity

• Early postoperative complications may lead to
  – Increased mortality
  – Effect patient well-being
  – Delay recovery
  – Increase length of hospital stay
Significant harms

- Unrecognised post-operative withdrawal symptoms.
- Such symptoms are often wrongly diagnosed as a variety of post-operative problems.
- Thiamine deficiency that leads to delays in both wound healing and functional recovery.
- Alcohol abuse is a significant factor in development of wound infections.

Alcohol Reduction- preoperatively

• Stratification of patient risk to identify appropriate treatment goals

• Plan surgery to time with achievement of alcohol treatment goal

• A supportive strategy for alcohol reduction or cessation: utilizing local services and protocols
Conclusions

• Alcohol represents a significant risk to patients undergoing any surgery

• Screening and subsequent risk stratification enables appropriate preoperative care and goal setting

• Appropriate planned care reduces
  – Mortality
  – Unexpected withdrawal
  – Infection rates
  – Delay in healing
  – Total bed days
References

• Khuri SF, Henderson WG, DePalma RG, Mosca C, Healey NA, Kumbhani DJ.