

Alcohol Rituals and Active Ageing: A Thematic Analysis of Semi-Structured Interviews with Retirees in the West of Scotland

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Abstract : This paper explores alcohol consumption amongst retirees in the West of Scotland in the context of active and healthy ageing discourses. The public health consequences of alcohol use are well documented and of growing concern to policy makers in Scotland and elsewhere. However, alcohol occupies a prominent position in a range of cultural and social practices and has associated meanings for users related to conviviality, leisure, sociability, and inclusion- features closely tied to active and healthy ageing. These perceived positive and negative meanings place alcohol in an ambiguous and contradictory position in relation to the Scottish Government's key health policy initiatives aimed at healthy ageing and the reduction of alcohol-related ill-health. This paper explores these positive and negative associations through an examination of the meanings which retirees attach to alcohol and the routines and rituals they develop to navigate wider health concerns. Methods: participants were recruited from the West of Scotland area using a quota sampling design based around gender, age, and socioeconomic position. Forty participants were interviewed using a semi-structured interview schedule and qualitative techniques. The interviews were transcribed and thematic analysis of the data was conducted. Results: Alcohol use amongst retirees in Scotland was widely varied with marked differences noted in terms of gender and age group, but with less clear variance by socioeconomic position. A range of strategies was employed to limit alcohol use by time, context, location and/or volume and these strategies clearly drew on a perception of alcohol use in retirement as potentially more problematic than at earlier stage of life. Thus, the retirees in the sample used these limiting strategies to navigate the positive and negative meanings they attached to alcohol use.

Keywords : alcohol, health, retirement, routines

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