

Frequency of Problem Drinking and Depression in Males with a History of Alcohol Consumption Admitted to a Tertiary Care Setting in Southern Sri Lanka

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Abstract : Background: Problem drinking, namely alcohol dependence (AD) and alcohol abuse (AA) are associated with major medical, social and economic adverse consequences. Problem drinking behavior is noted among those admitted to hospitals due to alcohol-related medical/surgical complaints as well as those with unrelated complaints. Literature shows an association between alcohol consumption and depression. Aims of this study were to determine the frequency of problem drinking and depression among males with a history of alcohol consumption tertiary care setting in Southern Sri Lanka. Method: Two-hundred male patients who consumed alcohol, receiving care in medical and surgical wards in Teaching Hospital Galle, were assessed. A validated J12 questionnaire of the Mini International Neuropsychiatric Interview was administered to determine frequency AA and AD. A validated PHQ 9 questionnaire to determine the prevalence and severity of depression. Results: Sixty-three participants (31%) had problem drinking. Of them, 61% had AD, and 39% had AA. Depression was noted in 39 (19%) subjects. In those who reported alcohol consumption not amounting to problem drinking, depression was noted in 23 (16%) participants. Mild depression was seen in 17, moderate in five and moderately severe in one. Among those who had problem drinking, 16 (25%) had depression. Mild depression was seen in four, moderate in seven, moderately severe in three and severe in two. Conclusions: A high proportion alcohol users had problem drinking. Adverse consequences associated with problem drinking places a major strain on the health system especially in a low resource setting where healthcare spending is limited and alcohol cessation support services are not well organised. Thus alcohol consumption and problem drinking behaviour need to be inquired into all medical consultations. Community prevalence of depression in Sri Lanka is approximately 10%. Depression among those consuming alcohol was two times higher compared to the general population. The rates of depression among those with problem drinking were especially high being 2.5 times more common than in the general population. A substantial proportion of these patients with depression had moderately severe or severe depression. When depression coexists with problem drinking, it may increase the tendency to consume alcohol as well as act as a barrier to the success of alcohol cessation interventions. Thus screening all patients who consume alcohol for depression, especially those who are problem drinkers becomes an important step in their clinical evaluation. In addition, in view of the high prevalence of problem drinking and coexistent depression, the need to organize a structured alcohol cessation support service in Sri Lanka as well as the need for increasing access to psychological evaluation and treatment of those with problem drinking are highlighted.

Keywords : alcohol abuse, alcohol, depression, problem drinking

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