

Alcoholism: A Social Menace

Jinu K. Rajan

Assistant Professor, Majmaah University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Abstract

Alcohol consumption is linked to many harmful consequences for the individual drinker, the drinker's immediate environment and society as a whole. Such social consequences as traffic accidents, workplace-related problems, family and domestic problems, and interpersonal violence have been receiving more public or research attention in recent years, indicating a growing interest in a broader concept of alcohol-related consequences.

Keywords: Alcoholism; Social Menace.

Introduction

Globally, alcohol problems exert an enormous toll on the lives and communities of many nations, especially those in the developing world. The patterns of alcohol intake around the world are constantly evolving, and alcohol is common today.

People today celebrate every festival. They need no excuse of celebrations to drink. Liquor, brandy, whisky, rum or beer, whatever be the brand, these are the main ingredients of peoples celebrations. Festivals may be different but drinks are common.

For anything and everything they are going in search of alcoholic drinks, birth or death, success or failure, happiness or grief, alcohol lead the way. But in festive celebrations they forget themselves and take more and more than regular menu. Unemployment or poverty never affects drunkard's life. By all means they make sure to get their favorite brands.

Young people, especially teenagers, are more sensitive to alcohol use because their bodies and brains are still developing.

Kerala has the highest per capita alcohol consumption in the country with 8.5 liters alcohol per person. There is also a limited awareness among most of the people regarding the physical and psychological consequences of alcohol use.

Early identification and education may be effective with "at risk" drinkers in reducing serious health problems and dependence.

A series of studies conducted by ADIC-India from 1986 to 2006 reveals alarming increase and shocking patterns of alcohol use among the young generation. This also leads to increase in criminality and other vices.

The significant trends observed in Kerala are lowering in the age of initiation, alarming increase in the young drinking population and more girls and young women turning to alcohol in spite of strong religious and cultural taboos. "The main factors for the trend are the impact of globalization and liberalization policies, easy availability, starting of more beer parlours, and the influence of cinema and television serials and the influence of Alco-pub culture. The high-paying jobs that youth land up in nowadays leave them with a disposable income that becomes a contributing factor".

Even one or two drinks can result in changes in behavior and a decrease in one's ability to think clearly – both concentration and judgment become impaired. If alcohol consumption is excessive, the drinker will become intoxicated.

Effects of Alcoholism

Alcohol consumption is associated with liver and pancreatic disorders. Recurrent stomach disorder, hypertension, stroke damage to brain, liver and heart, domestic, occupational and road traffic accidents and injury can result from quite light or moderate drinking.

Corresponding Author: Jinu K. Rajan, Room Number-7BL, SFS, Symphony Apartment, Opposite All India Radio, Vazhuthacaud, Trivandrum, Kerala, Pin 695014.
E-mail: jinukrajan@rediffmail.com

Gastrointestinal Problems

Inflammation of lining of stomach (gastritis) interference with absorption of vitamin B particularly folic acid and thiamine and other nutrients are associated with alcohol intake. Chronic alcoholism can produce cirrhosis of liver and fatty infiltration of the liver. In cirrhosis of liver there will be the fibrous scar tissue formation in the liver manifested by jaundice, fatigue, loss of appetite, weight loss, anemia, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, acites and other disturbances which lead to liver dysfunction.

Increased Risk of Cancer

Chronic alcohol abuse has been linked to higher risk of numerous cancers including cancer of mouth, pharynx, esophagus, larynx, liver colon and rectum. Excessive drinking can affect nervous system causing numbness of hands and feet, hangover, disordered thinking, slurred speech, loss of muscle control, dementia.

Alcohol may interfere with the production of new bone. This can lead to thinning bones and an increased risk of fractures.

Pregnancy Risks

Alcohol can cause numerous birth defects, the most serious being foetal alcohol syndrome. Babies born with foetal alcohol syndrome will have physical abnormalities, mental impairment and problems with behavior.

Conclusion

Alcohol consumption is associated with physical, psychological and social consequences. While it carries connotations of pleasure and sociability in the minds of many, harmful consequences of its use are diverse and widespread. To reduce the harmful social and health consequences of alcohol use much preparation and Planning is required. It is our

responsibility to encourage health awareness and formulate effective public health-oriented countermeasures in order to minimize the use of alcohol

References

1. Hingson RW, Heeren T, Zakocs RC, et al. Magnitude of alcohol-related mortality and morbidity among U.S. college students ages 18–24. *J Stud Alcohol*. 2002; 63(2): 136–144.
2. White AM, Kraus CL, Swartzwelder H. Many college freshmen drink at levels far beyond the binge threshold. *Alcohol Clin Exp Res*. 2006; 30(6): 1006–1010.
3. Slutske WS. Alcohol use disorders among US college students and their non-college-attending peers. *Arch Gen Psychiatry*. 2005; 62(3): 321–327.
4. Wechsler H, Lee JE, Kuo M, et al. College binge drinking in the 1990's: a continuing problem: results of the Harvard School of Public Health 1999 College Alcohol Study. *J Am Coll Health*. 2000; 48: 199–210.
5. Hingson R, Heeren T, Winter M, et al. Magnitude of alcohol-related mortality and morbidity among U.S. college students ages 18–24: changes from 1998 to 2001. *Ann Rev Pub Health*. 2005; 26: 259–279.
6. Paschall MJ. College attendance and risk-related driving behavior in a national sample of young adults. *J Stud Alcohol*. 2003; 64(1): 43–49.
7. Wechsler H, Dowdall GW, Maenner G, et al. Changes in binge drinking and related problems among American college students between 1993 and 1997. Results of the Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study. *J Am Coll Health*. 1998; 47: 57–68.
8. Johnston LD, O'Malley PM, Bachman JG, et al. Monitoring the Future: national results on adolescent drug use: overview of key findings 2005 (online) [Accessed July 5, 2006]. Available at: <http://monitoringthefuture.org/pubs/monographs/overview2005.pdf>.
9. O'Hare TM. Drinking in college: consumption patterns, problems, sex differences and legal drinking age. *J Stud Alcohol*. 1990; 51: 536–541.
10. Engs RC, Diebold BA, Hansen DJ. The drinking patterns and problems of a national sample of college students, 1994. *J Alcohol Drug Educ*. 1996; 41(3): 13–33.