



POSTER PRESENTATION

Alcohol misuse among older women – an under-recognized problem

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Abstract

Introduction: Population is aging quickly and there is an increasing number of older women misusing alcohol, which is of concern because the adverse health effects in this group are greater. Clinical research is beginning to explain the results of unrecognized alcohol abuse or dependence on elderly.

Objectives: To provide an overview of alcohol misuse among older women.

Methods: Literature review based on articles published on PubMed/MEDLINE, between January 2005 and January 2015, using the keywords “alcohol use”, “alcoholism”, “women”, “elderly”.

Results: The prevalence of alcohol misuse among older women ranges between less than 1% and 8%. Looking at the growing ageing population, effective prevention and intervention techniques and approaches targeted to older at-risk drinkers are essential. Elderly people suffer from many medical and psychiatric conditions influenced by alcohol consumption. However, alcohol problems in older women are less likely to be recognized by health care providers, probably because this group generally drink less than older men or abstain from alcohol. Importantly, this population may be

especially at risk for alcohol problems. They have social, psychological and physical risk factors that make them particularly susceptible. Comparing with men in same age group, elderly women are less likely to be financially independent and tend to live alone longer and to face other losses that can exacerbate depression and the use of alcohol. Furthermore, physiologically, women are at greater risk for negative effects of increased alcohol consumption as they age. Alcohol misuse is associated with adverse medical outcomes, including osteoporosis, cardiovascular disease and cancer. Also, it can lead to negative psychosocial effects (social isolation, legal problems, financial distress, and/or family or relationship problems). Crucially, physical and/or psychiatric comorbidity heightens the alcohol effects. Screening, brief intervention, and referral to treatment is the recommended approach for identifying persons engaged in at-risk alcohol use.

Discussion and Conclusions: Early detection by health care providers can reduce the prevalence of alcohol problems and improve overall health in older women. So, an increased effort on effective identification and subsequent treatment is warranted.

Supplementary material: Complete presentation available at <http://ijcnmh.arc-publishing.org>

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