

Features of the first alcohol test – subsequent attitude of 6th year students at the State Medical University in Grodno, Belarus

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Abstract

Objective. To clarify the mechanism of initiation of young people to alcohol, determine what factors influence this process, and identify the particular attitude to alcohol at a young age.

Materials and method. 188 graduates of the medical university were interviewed in 2010. A questionnaire was developed in the Department of Social Medicine at the Karol Marcinkowski University of Medicine in Poznań, Poland: 'Kwestionariusz ankiety dotyczącej konsumpcji napojów alkoholowych i aktywności fizycznej' (2006).

Results. It was found that 97.6% of students consciously drink alcohol. The average age of first use of alcohol was 15,4±0,48. Most young people have consumed alcohol for the first time (more beer, champagne, wine) in a club (disco) and at home (at a family celebration). Most often, respondents (46.4%) have tried alcohol on their own initiative at a family celebration. About 7.14% of students regretted drinking alcohol for the first time (from shame, quarrels with parents, physiological discomfort). 92.86% did not have feelings of regret because, in most cases, the first sample of the alcohol did not cause any reaction from parents or other relatives. 84.52% had used alcohol in the last 30 days: beer – 36.9%, wine – for 33.3%, and vodka – 28.6%. One-third had used alcohol once or twice in the last month, 16.67%-twice a week, 13.1% – one day a week. On the question of the causes of alcohol use, half of students responded: 'to relax' or 'family holidays'; every fifth – 'for the company', one in ten 'in response to good toast' or simply because 'I like it'. The most common negative result of alcohol consumption (almost every fourth) was because of smoking. Lapses in memory after alcohol were noted in 20 (23%) of students, actions provoked by alcohol and subsequently regretted were stated by 17.86% of respondents. One third of the students regret that they ever drank. Although two-thirds thought about the effects of alcohol, only a quarter limit its use. Application area: the results obtained are the basis for the development and introduction of measures of prophylaxis, for the attachment of alcohol among young people, first of all – work with the family, as well as educational work in schools, colleges and universities. Degree of introduction: the results were presented at a scientific conference in Grodno and introduced into the educational process at the Department of Public Health and Health Care. As a result of the study, talks were conducted with the students on the theme 'Bad Habits in Modern Society'.

Key words

young people, alcohol, prevention

INTRODUCTION

The problem of the health of teenagers and young people is extant worldwide and the demographic crisis is especially evident in rural settlements. According to some reports, young people living in rural areas are relatively disadvantaged in comparison with residents of urban settlements. [1].

At the same time, the results of studies conducted in Russia have shown that in the process of associating young people with psychoactive substances is not influence by the type of residence – urban or rural, but on satisfaction with financial status of the family, its socio-economic status [2]. Social stereotypes existing in the youth environment change, and smoking, drinking beer and soft drinks have become an attribute of young people [3]. At the same time, lifelong social skills are formed early in life, including skills of health

protection, behaviours in relation to health which, in turn, form the basis for the quality of life, and subsequently related to health [2, 3]. This is why researches into the mechanism for attachment and subsequent relationship of young people to the consumption of psychoactive substances are highly sought after in Belarus. The results of these researches are especially important for the young people attending senior courses who begin to create their own families.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

In order to specify the mechanism of the attachment of young people to the consumption of alcohol, what factors influence this this process, and identify the particular relationship to alcohol at a young age, 188 graduates of the medical university in Grodno were interviewed in 2010. A questionnaire was developed in the Department of Social Medicine at the Karol Marcinkowski University of Medicine in Poznań, 'Kwestionariusz ankiety dotyczącej konsumpcji napojów alkoholowych i aktywności fizycznej' (2006).

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The age of the students ranged from 22–26 years; at the time of the study the majority (46.43%) were aged 23, 34.52% – 22, and 13,1% – 24. Among the respondents there were 58 males (31%) and 130 females (69%).

Every fifth respondent lived in the city of Grodno, about 16% were urban dwellers, while 36% were rural inhabitants.

Living conditions were as follows: the majority (58.33%) lived in a dormitory of the corridor type, 15.48% – in a dormitory of the block type (e.g., small families), 19.05% – in own apartment and rented own room, 7.14% – in their own homes (fig. 1).

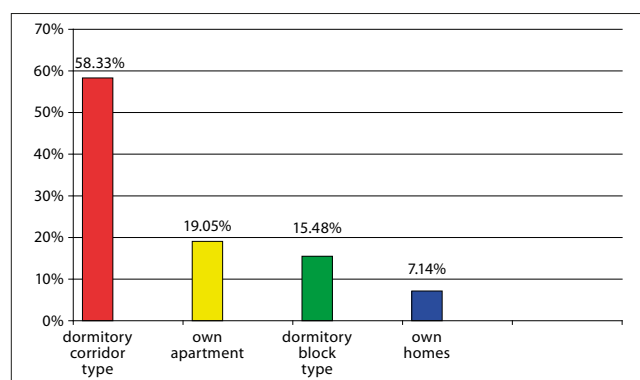


Figure 1. Living conditions of students

In almost a half of the respondents (49.2%), the mother had a higher education, 32% – professional, 18.8% – average. Higher education on the part of the father was declared by 41.6% of respondents, 34.1% – professional, and 24.3% – average. Material status of the family was assessed by 50.2% of the students as good, average – 30.7%, 9.3% – as very good, 7.6% – as difficult, 1.7% – as very difficult. Less than 1% were unable to assess the material status of their family (fig. 2).

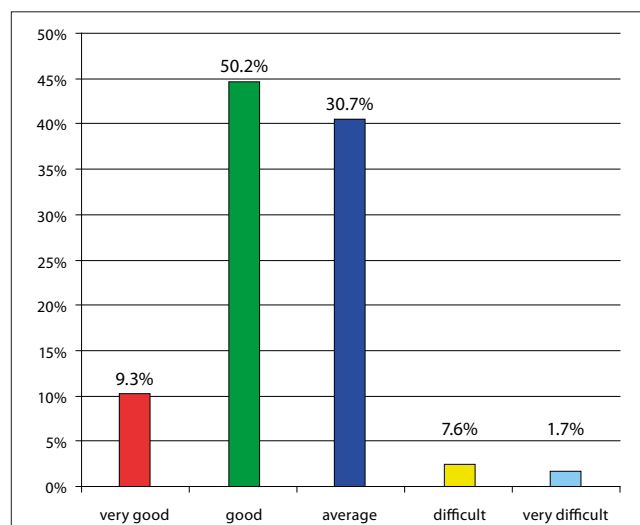


Figure 2. Material status of students' families

The great majority of graduates (97.6%) had consciously used alcoholic beverages. The average age of first alcohol use was 15.4 ± 0.48 years.

For almost half of the respondents (49%), the first alcoholic drink was champagne, every fourth-fifth (21.8%) had tried beer first, every fifth (19.6%) – wine. For 5.5% of the students the first drink they had tried was vodka. A small percentage

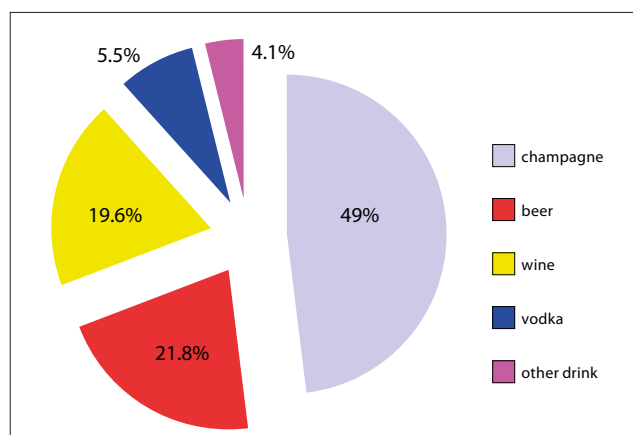


Figure 3. Type of alcohol used first

of the students chose various 'cocktails', or marked on the questionnaire 'other drink' (fig. 3).

As the place where alcohol was first tried and the circumstances in which it happened, almost a third of the students chose the answer 'at a club' (disco), two-thirds – a family celebration (at home), and a quarter of them – while celebrating the New Year. About 19.04% first tried alcohol with a friend/friends, 6.1% – at a wedding, 4.5% – outside, on the street. Those who chose another variants of answer appeared insignificant. For the first time alcohol had been drunk, it had been proposed by the parents (28.24%) or friends (16.29%). The majority (46.4%), however, had tried alcohol independently – on own initiative. For 9.07%, alcohol was proposed for the first time by other relatives (uncles, aunts, grandparents) of the respondents (fig. 4).

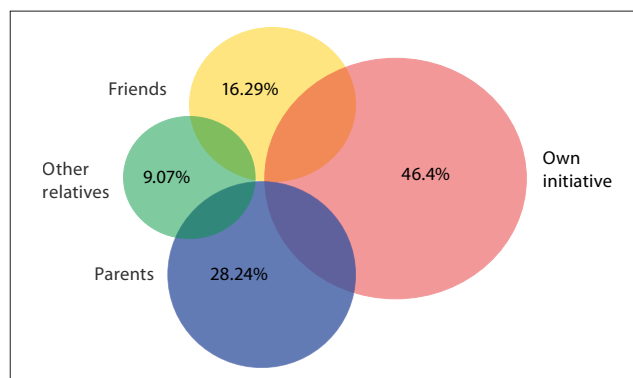


Figure 4. Who first suggested using alcohol

The great majority of the students (89.6%) did not experience any problems when first trying alcohol. Only a small number experiencing dizziness (4.2%), nausea (2.6%), headache (1.7%), and less than 1% chose the responses 'vomiting', 'cold', 'short-term memory loss' ('blackout'). 92.6% of respondents did not have any problems with parents after the first alcoholic drink. Others Responded with the replies 'banned from a walk', 'quarrel', 'punishment', or 'conversation'.

About 7.14% of the students regretted drinking alcohol for the first time, with the reasons Niven as a sense of shame, a quarrel with parents, physiological discomfort (parahypnosis, off-flavour, headache). Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority (84.52%) responded positively to the question about whether they had consumer an alcoholic drink during the last 30 days. For 36.1% of respondents this

had been beer, for 33.3% – wine, and for 28.6% – vodka. Only 1% of the students had drunk champagne during the last month champagne, while 0.2% had drunk a cocktail. Other drinks, such as cognac, gin-and-tonic and martini, had been drunk by less than 1% of those polled.

The frequency of the use of alcohol varied in the last month; Hus, 15.48% had not consumer alcohol during the last month, one-third had drunk alcohol 'once Or twice' during the last month, 14.3% – several times in the last month (3–4 times), 16.67% twice in a week, and 13.1% – once a week.

On a question about reasons for the use alkohol, 25.5% answered 'to relax', 26.4% – 'because of a family celebration', 18.4% – 'for company', 10.4% – 'in response to a good toast, 10.2% – 'I like it', 2.9% – 'for more entertainment'. 1.2% of those polled chose the answer: 'for health', or to 'mark a successful application for employment'. About 1.1% consumed alcohol 'to forget problems.' Other answers included 'to feel like an adult', 'to celebrate a sporting success', 'I like alcohol', 'due to a failure at the university, 'because I am unable to say "no", wanting to be like their parents', or 'to be brave'.

On the question whether drinking ever led to an alcohol detoxification centre or hospitalization, less than 1% of the respondents answered In the affirmative. None of the respondents had taken an alcohol or drug test. In almost one in four, drinking had led to smoking. Memory loss after drinking alcoholic beverages was noted 20 respondents – 23%, 20% had missed classes or been given a bad grade. Almost 4% reported rheum or a cold, whereas in 12% it had resulted in a casual sexual contact.

Regret after drinking alcohol was expressed by 17.86% of the students, 1.4% had problems with law enforcement authorities. A scandal or quarrel in the family as the consequence of alcohol use occurred in 8.3% of respondents, physical violence, escape from home was stated by less than 1% of cases. Driving under the influence of alkohol: a car – 3.6%, bicycle – 4.8%, and motor cycle – 2.1%.

About 3.8% students had experienced violence from a drunk person Almost one in ten was ever in a car driven drunk driver. Less than 1% of respondents indicated that the fall in road accidents due to alkohol (?)

Almost half of the respondents (43.4%) regretted having drunk alkohol. Two-thirds (62.5%) thought about the consequences of drinking, according to the following answers (in descending order): 'after failure of memory', 'the next day', 'when friends get drunk', 'when I see drunk people', 'after a quarrel', 'after an advertisement', 'when thinking about future children', 'a bad afterwards', 'when a friend died of alkohol poisoning', 'when I think about health', and 'when I looked at myself'.

Despite the regret, only a quarter of the respondents limited the use of alcohol. When asked why they continued to use alcohol, the students replied: 'as it happens', 'to relax', 'for company', 'on holidays', and 'because like it'.

41.4% of the respondents had come accross anti-alcohol advertising: 52% – criticism of alcohol, 10.7% – anti-alcohol

memo, 15.3% – anti-alcohol poster. Only 0.6% answered that 'nothing of the kind was met'.

Almost every tenth respondent smoked; a half of them smoked less than 5 cigarettes a day, a quarter – from 6–10 cigarettes a day, and the rest – more than 10 cigarettes a day. Almost 3% of respondents have ever used a drug.

CONCLUSION

At the moment of entering university most young people are already acquainted with alcohol. The first test of alcohol takes place at a young age, most of all under the influence of family, parents, and friends. Young people living in rural areas, tend on their own initiative to undertake the first trial drink of alcohol. A high distribution of the use of low-alcoholic drinks is characteristic. At the moment of entering university beer, becomes the most often consumed drink.

At older age, there is a tendency to consciously consumer liquor, as well as increase the frequency of its use, resulting in many negative consequences. This pattern is most common among students living in dormitories, associated with the presence of company and absence of control by parents.

The results of the presented study suggest that measures aimed at reducing the spread of alcohol among young people are much needed in the Republic of Belarus: a necessary reduction in the availability of alcohol to young people, a ban on the advertising of alcoholic products and tobacco, and the recognition of all the negative effects of their its use on the younger generation.

Despite the fact that the sale of alcoholic beverages to minors is prohibited by law, young people are introduced to alcohol by their parents, which subsequently leads to the formation of behavior in relation to alcohol. Consequently, measures are needed to work with the familie. The social norms must be changed: a healthy way of life introduced, and the stigmatization of drunkenness.

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