

MEETING ABSTRACT

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From juniors to seniors: pattern of rise of alcohol problems among university students in Belarus

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Background

The paucity of data concerning the problem of alcohol use among young adults (especially the students' population) in Belarus has contributed partly to the increase in the prevalence of alcohol use and related problems, as no intervention program is carried out. The cases of alcoholic liver cirrhosis, psychoses have been shown to increase in middle adulthood, and this is a major problem to public health. A screening that will address the rate of rise of alcohol use and related problems in relation to both the age and year of study in the university will be of great importance. Besides, the students' population is easily accessible, and since every data suggest that screening for the prevalence of alcohol use in the student's population, and subsequent intervention is of great benefit to public health [1-3], we therefore, screen for the prevalence of alcohol use and related problems in the general Belarusian students' population and trace the rate of rise of alcohol use and related problems in course of study in major universities in Minsk, Belarus.

Materials and methods

A total of 565 (first-second year, mean age - 18.9 yrs), 537 (third-fourth year, mean age - 20.9 yrs) and 397 (fifth-sixth year, mean age - 22.8 yrs) university students in Minsk, Belarus were administered the AUDIT questionnaire, including other alcohol related questions. The cut-off point on the AUDIT was set at 8. All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS 16.0 version for Windows; the criteria of Pearson, χ^2 and Student's t tests. The probability value for significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

Results

Alcohol users in the first-second, third-fourth, fifth-sixth years of study were 83.6%, 85.6%, 94.2% respectively; the problem drinkers were 14.5%, 17.9%, 20.9% respectively. The use of strong strength alcoholic beverages was linked with a high risk of alcohol related problems, than the use of weak alcoholic beverages in the general students' population.

Conclusions

Statistically significant increase in alcohol use was noted only between students of first-second and fifth-sixth years of study ($p < 0.05$). There was a gradual rise in the percentage of problem drinkers in relation to the increase in the year of study ($p < 0.05$). The level of alcohol use and related problems in the general students' population in Belarus are high and show increase in order of increase both in the average age and in the year of study.

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