

GINA monthly e-news July 08

Barcelona Harm Reduction – Gender Equality

The International Harm Reduction Association (IHRA) held its 19th international conference in Barcelona this year, and took place from the 11th to 15th of May. Every year the conferences are held in different locations, and focus on the latest topics and events from across the field. At the conference was a session looking at Alcohol Harm Reductions for ‘at risk’ populations. The aim of the session was to identify ways in which harmful social and health outcomes related to alcohol misuse can be minimised for particular “at-risk” populations. Betsy Thom, professor of health policy at Middlesex University, addressed the complex reasons why women had become an ‘at risk’ group for alcohol harm. Speaking to the Daily Update she discusses the need to keep in mind the wide range of barriers faced by women seeking help or remaining in treatment, that include “stigma and judgmental attitudes from professionals as well as others, fear of ‘the authorities’ and repercussions for children, carer responsibilities which limit freedom to access services, living with a heavy drinking spouse – among other difficulties.”

One of the Plenary Session topics of the conference was **‘What can be done to ensure gender equality in the field of harm reduction?’** This session was chaired by Sue Currie, who discussed the issue of access to services with to the conferences Daily Update prior to the session. She said “Access means different things. It means something very different if you’re a Muslim woman in Afghanistan than if you’re an aboriginal woman in northern Canada, so you have to look at it in the context of other elements. Even if you’re in north America, accessing a programme might mean coming up against barriers for you and your family, like potential child protection issues.” The session looked at

positive programmes and strategies in relation to access to services that have worked around the world. To find out more about the conference visit www.ihra.net

Source: Harm Reduction Daily Update, 13th May 2008



In the News . . .

Changing Scotland’s relationship with alcohol

On 17th June the Scottish Government unveiled their plans to tackle Scotland’s binge – drinking culture. The plan would see anyone under the age of 21 banned from buying alcohol in off-licenses and set a minimum price at which a unit of alcohol can be sold. The consultation document also proposes ending some cheap drink promotions and making some retailers help pay for the consequences of alcohol abuse. Unveiling the document, Health Secretary, Nicola Sturgeon confirmed that there would be an £85m increase in alcohol prevention, treatment and support services, bringing total spending to £120m over the next three years. She said “We believe that by raising the age for off-sales purchase of alcohol to 21, together with better enforcement, we will reduce excessive consumption among young people”. Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill said he hoped the proposal would “kick-start a long term cultural shift in society”.

Source: BBC News Online, 17/06/08

Half of women drink alcohol while pregnant

More than half of women drink alcohol while pregnant despite growing evidence that it can lead to low IQ, attention deficit disorders and more serious lifelong complications in children. Older mothers are more likely to drink while pregnant than younger ones, the latest figures from the National Health Service show. Last year the Department of Health revised guidelines to say women should not drink at all during pregnancy. Figures released by the NHS Information Centre revealed that 55% of women in the UK admitted drinking alcohol while pregnant. The survey also found 61% of mothers aged 35 or over said they drank while pregnant compared to 47% of those aged under 20. Reliable studies on the numbers of babies born affected by alcohol have not been carried out in the UK, but in other European countries and in America and Canada it is estimated that between 20 and 40 children per 1000 have foetal alcohol spectrum disorder and fewer have the full blown syndrome.

Source: www.telegraph.co.uk, 23/05/08

Drink and drugs 'key' to suicide

Alcohol and drug misuse means Scots are almost twice as likely as people south of the border to take their own life or kill, a new report has said. Research from Manchester University also showed the number of mental health patients killing themselves or others was proportionately higher in Scotland. The report found that the north-south divide was highest among teenagers. It said alcohol and drugs were the "most pressing mental health problems in Scotland". The Lessons for Mental Health Care in Scotland report was commissioned by the Scottish Government. Of the 1,373 patient suicides in the report, there was a history of alcohol misuse in 785 cases, an average of 131 deaths per year. There was a history of drug misuse witnessed in 522 cases, or 87 deaths per year. Louis Appleby, professor of psychiatry at Manchester University, said "Our findings support the view that alcohol and drugs are the most pressing mental health problems in Scotland and mental health services can play their part".

Source: BBC News Online, 15/06/08

Plans to toughen sex crime laws

Plans to toughen laws on rape, consent, spiking drinks and offensive e-mail and texts have been unveiled as part of an overhaul of sex crime legislation. Introducing the Sexual Offences (Scotland) Bill, based on proposals from the Scottish Law Commission, Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill said it represented a chance to clarify and strengthen the law on rape and sexual offences. As well as a broader definition of rape, the bill creates a range of statutory sexual offences and a definition of consent based on "free agreement", with illustrative scenarios. One of these scenarios would be where a victim was incapable through alcohol or other substances. Community Safety spokesman Mike Pringle said "Statistics show that one in four people think that women are asking to be raped or assaulted if they have drunk too much or wear revealing clothing. Those attitudes need to be challenged."

Source: BBC News Online, 18/06/08



Alcohol Debate

The alcohol debate was launched in Scotland at the end of April, with the aim of motivating Scots to think about the impact of alcohol misuse, recognising the relevance to themselves on a personal level, as well as the scale of Scotland's alcohol problems. It is now well under way, with a variety of debates open to the public to express their opinions. **'Is alcohol harming women's health?'** is one of the issues up for debate on the website, which has attracted responses from all over the country. Below are a few of the comments that have been added so far :

"Not being a native of Scotland (from Canada originally) it always surprises me how much people here drink. Especially

during the week, which is not very common at home. It surprises me too how publicly drunk people get and find it quite shocking to see women in that state too. It does happen at home but it tends to be a rare occurrence.”

Alexis, Edinburgh. Friday, 23 May, 2008

“I appreciate the problems with public drunkenness and people getting into sticky situations, but I don't think there's much wrong with a few glasses of wine if you stay in control. I think I'd feel a lot worse if I didn't de-stress with a chilled glass of something white after a hard day!”

Becks, Glasgow.
Friday, 23 May, 2008

“Alcohol is harming everyone's health if consumed excessively, not just women's. This country seems to be turning into 'Booze Britain' and it seems that some people are using alcohol, albeit subconsciously, to escape the stresses, strains and milieu of modern life. That said, we need to take a balanced view. Like everything else, moderation is the key here.”

Gillian, Dundee. Monday 26 May 2008

“There are less than 500Kcal in a bottle of red wine. So about the same as 1.5 Snickers bars. Which would you rather consume slowly over the course of an evening in good company perhaps once every couple weeks?”

Roger Hyam, Edinburgh.
Saturday, 31 May, 2008

Visit www.alcoholdebate.com and have your say. Some of the thought provoking online debates are:

Do women take more risks after a few drinks?

Are our kids drinking too much too soon?

Does alcohol affect our relationship with others?

And the current debate asks **Are we drinking too much?**



Marie Claire ad campaigns

The July edition of women's magazine Marie Claire features an interesting article that examines the issue of women centred alcohol campaigns, as the government launches a new campaign aimed at middle class women and their drinking. The magazine asks "Are we being unfairly targeted, or is it time to get real about our relationship with Rioja?" They have asked three top advertising agencies, AMV, TBWA and Fallon to create campaigns to make women more drink aware. The three agencies all take different approaches in their campaigns, focusing on different aspects of female alcohol misuse. AMV's campaign tackles the hidden hangover, breast cancer, where as Fallon's campaign highlights what alcohol does to a women's internal organs, and the third campaign by TBWA agency tackles the issue of alcohol misuse affecting a woman's appearance. The three very different approaches can be viewed online, where Marie Claire asks readers to vote on which ad campaign they find most powerful. Log on now to cast your vote at www.marieclaire.co.uk
Source: Marie Claire, July 2008

Resources

Alcohol and Depression leaflet

This new leaflet is produced by The Royal College of Psychiatrists. It contains basic facts about alcohol and depression, how to help yourself, how to help people you care for, how to get further help and where to find more information.

Women and Alcohol Fact Sheet

A document published by the Institute of Alcohol Studies relating to women and alcohol use. It addresses the size of the problem, why and where women drink, the effect of alcohol on women, victimization, reasons for heavy drinking in women and whether there is a need for special services for women.

Alcohol and Older People leaflet

A patient information leaflet from the Royal College of Psychiatrists designed for older people worried about their drinking, those concerned about them and anyone who wants to know more about the effects of drinking in older people.

Events

Thursday 17th July 2008, No Boundaries - Domestic Abuse and Substance Misuse Conference, Perth Concert Hall

Two guest speakers will attend - Dr Sarah Galvani, Professor at the University of Warwick and Marai Larasi, Executive Director of NIA Project.

Monday 8th September 2008, Binge Britain: Significant Harm for the Unborn Child, Edgehill University, Liverpool

This is part of a series of four one-day conferences looking at drug and alcohol usage and the effect on the unborn child. For more information contact Charlotte Lindsell on 020 7520 2880 or email charlotte@parentsforchildren.org.uk

Monday 6th October 2008, Alcohol and violence - Holyrood Conference, Edinburgh

The conference will bring together experts in alcohol addiction, community safety and policing strategies who will discuss what solutions can be implemented to produce positive cultural change.

Training

Introduction to Women's Studies, Stow College

Women's Studies involves looking at a wide range of issues relevant to women in society. Some of these issues are current,

and some are historical. This course is specifically designed for women who have been out of education for some time. Call **014 552 8345** for more information.

Diploma in Women's Studies, Stow College

This is the only course of its kind in the UK and offers a unique insight into gender issues in the twenty-first century and is offered on a part-time basis. For more information about the course email Pam Currie at pcurrie@stow.ac.uk

Do you have any information you would like to share with the GINA network?

We would love to hear from you if you have examples of best practice, studies of interest, information on services or upcoming events etc. If so please get in touch.

The next GINA newsletter will be distributed in August 2008.

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