

Fortnightly GINA News, week ending 23rd May 2008

Media

£10m warning for older drinkers

A £10m advertising campaign targeting older drinkers will warn wine lovers who consume two or three glasses a night that they may be failing to recognise the risks they face. In one advertisement, a pair of large glasses full of red wine, which resemble breasts, are used to remind women of the link between excess alcohol intake and breast cancer. Research for the campaign conducted for the Department of Health by YouGov found that half of 35- to 44-year-olds and 44 % of 45- to 54-year-olds rely on alcohol to unwind after a stressful day.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2008/may/18/drugsandalcohol.health1>

Female violence in Scotland up by 60% fuelled by drink

Violent crimes committed by women have soared by more than 60% in the past five years, fuelled by the hard-drinking ladette culture, according to figures obtained by The Sunday Times. While the number of women found guilty of murder has remained level at around eight each year, common assaults have risen 61% to 2,307. Overall, the number of women convicted of violent crimes rose from 1,637 to 2,618. The number of serious assaults and attempted murders by women rose by 36% to more than 100. The statistics support the recent warning by Elish Angiolini, the lord advocate, that women were becoming the "prime movers" in violent crimes and had been responsible for "appalling acts of torture".

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/scotland/article3822837.ece>

Drink blamed for an outbreak of violence

Police chiefs today hit out at binge drinkers after a spate of alcohol-fuelled violence in Portsmouth. And police say it was women who were to blame for many of the drunken incidents at the weekend. Inspector Jon Snook, from Portsmouth Central Police Station, said: 'It's disappointing that stupid people go out drinking to excess and clearly come out of venues having drunk far too much and problems occur outside.' His comments come as police continue with Operation Drink Safe – the News-backed drive to cut alcohol-fuelled crime.

<http://www.portsmouth.co.uk/drinksafe/Drink-blamed-for-an-outbreak.3247203.jp>

Booze blamed as five women a day charged with violence

Five women a day are being charged with violent behaviour in the Lothians, according to new figures on female offending revealed recently. More than 1500 women were arrested for an assault last year, and nearly 2000 were charged with antisocial behaviour in public. Experts said today that "growing numbers" of women were being embroiled in alcohol-related offences in Edinburgh, and blamed the binge-drinking "ladette" culture.

<http://news.scotsman.com/topstories?articleid=4033451>

Drinkers 'ignorant' about alcohol

Three-quarters of drinkers do not know a typical glass of wine contains three units of alcohol, a survey for the Department of Health suggests. 36% of women and 50% of men knew their recommended daily drinking limits were 2-3 units and 3-4 units respectively. Joe Korner, from The Stroke Association, said the organisation fully supports efforts to make people aware of the health risks associated with excessive drinking. "There are around 1,100 haemorrhagic stroke

deaths every year associated with alcohol and statistics show that women who drink over double their recommended limits are more than four times likely to suffer a stroke, and men almost twice as likely," he said.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/7399192.stm>

Drinking diaries: A doctor's verdict

Caroline Eardley, 27, classes herself as a social drinker, who drinks no more than other people she knows, so she was shocked when she saw her total. "I don't know anyone my age who sticks to 14 units a week." Caroline, who works in PR in London, added: "I have a good job, I have no problems at work so I think so long as I am dealing with the day-to-day I will deal with the future." "I'm not caning it every night so what damage can it be doing?" But Dr Dave Tomson, a Tyneside GP who works in alcohol services, said Caroline's drinking was "hazardous" and bordering on the "harmful and risky". "The risks for Caroline are what could happen to her after she has drunk 20 units." They might be very simple risks such as falling over and twisting her ankle, or doing her back in, or driving while drinking. And if this drinking level is a pattern she could also face relationship difficulties. "If she sustained this pattern of drinking she would gradually get early problems such as weight gain. She is drinking at least two extra meals a week." But he warned there were also long-term risks. "Over time Caroline faces rises in blood pressure both acute and chronic rises in cholesterol and a fatty liver. She will eventually increase her risk of heart disease, liver disease and stroke," he said. "She will also have an increased risk of breast cancer.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/7402652.stm>

Reeling from alcohol

On average, one person in Scotland dies every three hours and 40 minutes as the direct result of alcohol abuse and the figure is rising rapidly. Add in alcohol-related deaths from cancer, suicide, crime and accidents, and the human cost is considerably higher. The most sobering aspect of the figures released by the Office for National Statistics is the size of the gap between Scotland and the rest of the UK. For more than a decade, alcohol-related deaths among women in Scotland have been worse than for men in England. Few doubt the shocking mortality figures are set to get much worse. A large part of the problem is that binge drinking has become culturally embedded, with the girls staggering around our city centres on Saturday nights, merely copying their parents' binge drinking. And, although those from the most deprived areas are most at risk, there is also concern about middle-class households where two large gins and a bottle of wine are on the menu every night

http://www.theherald.co.uk/search/display.var.1213845.0.reeling_from_alcohol.php

Few docs ask about alcohol in pregnancy

Few pediatricians routinely ask about alcohol use during pregnancy and only 12% give advice consistent with national health guidelines, a study has found. Professor Elizabeth Elliott said a four-year national investigation of foetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) by the Australian Pediatric Surveillance Unit found reporting rates for FAS were low even though children could suffer multiple disabilities. Prof Elliott said her study identified 92 children with FAS and they had multiple physical, emotional, behavioural, learning, hearing and visual problems. Only 40% lived with a biological parent, 65% were indigenous and 51% had an affected sibling. "These findings indicate the need for education about FAS, clinical services, effective interventions and alcohol policy,"

<http://news.theage.com.au/national/few-docs-ask-about-alcohol-in-pregnancy-20080515-2eh9.html>

A girl's big night in

Among the tales of nappies and sleep deprivation, there is one topic of conversation that often crops up when new mothers get together: alcohol. University of Melbourne researcher Ben Killingsworth noted it when he was sitting in on playgroups as part of an anthropology PhD: the way they'd joke about sipping on the cooking wine or reminisce about their pre-baby exploits at

the pub. There was no evidence that the women were actually drinking at high levels - just that talking about drinking was a way of helping them make what for many middle-class women is a very difficult transition into motherhood.

<http://www.theage.com.au/news/diet/a-girls-big-night-in/2008/04/03/1206851067850.html>

Research and Policy

Harmful Drinking: Understanding Alcohol Misuse in Scotland (40 page report)

Alcohol and Assaults (page19) – By gender the most commonly documented location for women (36%) was in the home. Alcohol and Self-harm (page21) – 27% of men and 19% of women cited alcohol as the trigger for self-harming.

[http://www.nhshealthquality.org/nhsqis/files/Alcohol_overview_final%20\(low%20res\).pdf](http://www.nhshealthquality.org/nhsqis/files/Alcohol_overview_final%20(low%20res).pdf)

Should we consider an acceptable drinking level specifically for Postmenopausal women? Preliminary Findings

Aims: There are substantial neuroendocrine differences between postmenopausal (PMP) women and women with cyclic ovarian function. The aim is to evaluate whether alcoholic beverage consumption for PMP women should be the same for all women, as is currently the case, or different from that for women with cyclic ovarian function. **Conclusions:** Consideration should be given to lowering the acceptable level of drinking for PMP women to 5 total weekly drinks.

<http://alcalc.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/40/5/469?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=women&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&resourcetype=HWCIT>

Women, Alcohol and the menstrual cycle

This review presents evidence which implicates a role for menstrual cycle phase in the response of pre-menopausal women to moderate alcohol intake. The best evidence to date suggests that women eliminate alcohol more rapidly during the mid-luteal phase of the cycle. This finding needs to be substantiated by further studies

<http://alcalc.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/32/4/435?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=women&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&resourcetype=HWCIT>

Are alcoholic women more likely to drink premenstrually?

A retrospective questionnaire study of alcoholic women attending a clinic for abstaining alcoholics, a voluntary agency and a drop-in centre for people with alcohol problems was conducted over a 2-year period. The women were asked whether they experienced premenstrual symptoms based on Halbreich et al. s Premenstrual Assessment Form and were also administered the severity of Alcohol Dependence Questionnaire. The results showed that one-third of women drank more premenstrually than at other times of the month. It is concluded that knowledge of high-risk times of the month can aid counselling for this group of women.

<http://alcalc.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/31/2/145?maxtoshow=&HITS=25&hits=25&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=women&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&resourcetype=HWCIT>

Acute effect of Alcohol on androgens in premenopausal women

Aim: The aim was to investigate the effect of alcohol on androgen levels among premenopausal women. Eighty-seven women in the mid-cycle phase of the menstrual cycle, 47 of whom used oral contraceptives (OC+), were included in the study. The range for reported alcohol consumption was 0–4 drinks/day. The total testosterone levels were significantly higher after alcohol intake (0.5 g/kg) than after placebo at 45 min and 90 min from the start of drinking among both OC– and OC+ subjects. This effect was also seen in the free testosterone fraction. The effect on testosterone was more prominent among OC+ subjects. **Conclusions:** The present results suggest that the testosterone effect is related to the zero-order mechanism of ethanol oxidation. The observed testosterone and androstenedione effects are suggested to be the result of an increased androstenedione to testosterone conversion in the liver caused by the alcohol-mediated

elevation in the [NADH]:[NAD⁺] ratio. The present findings may be relevant in the development of hyperandrogenism and loss of female sexual characteristics associated with heavy alcohol consumption

<http://alcalc.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/35/1/84?maxtoshow=&HITS=25&hits=25&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=women&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&resourcetype=HWCIT>

Current alcohol use is associated with a reduction of Hot Flashes in midlife women

Aims: To examine the relation between current alcohol use, estradiol, estrone, and testosterone levels, and hot flashes in midlife women using a case–control study design. Subjects were midlife women (45–54 years) **Results:** The results indicate that current alcohol use (at least one day per month) was significantly associated with a reduced risk of hot flashes compared to non-use of alcohol, independent of age and smoking habits. The hot flashes experienced by current alcohol users were less severe and less frequent than those experienced by non-users of alcohol. Further, current alcohol users had similar levels of estradiol, estrone, and testosterone compared to non-users of alcohol. **Conclusions:** These data suggest that current alcohol use is associated with a reduced risk of any, severe, and frequent hot flashes in midlife women by a mechanism that may not include changes in sex steroid hormone levels.

<http://alcalc.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/40/6/563?maxtoshow=&HITS=25&hits=25&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=women&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&resourcetype=HWCIT>

Menstrual cycle in women addicted to alcohol during the first week following drinking cessation – changes of sex hormones levels in relation to selected clinical features

Aims: To assess the prevalence of hormonal dysfunction in women addicted to alcohol during first week following drinking cessation; to determine whether fluctuations of hormone levels in follicular, ovulation and luteal phases in addicted women are equal to those normally found in healthy women; to determine the association between hormonal imbalances with selected clinical features. **Conclusions:** The menstrual cycle disturbances in alcoholic women are most prominent around the middle part of the cycle and age influences the pattern of hormonal changes

<http://alcalc.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/42/2/80?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=women&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&resourcetype=HWCIT>

Different drinking patterns for women and men with alcohol dependence with and without alcoholic cirrhosis

Aim: The aim of our study was to investigate if there were differences in drinking patterns in patients with alcohol dependence, with or without cirrhosis. **Conclusions:** Patients with alcoholic cirrhosis seem to be predisposed to the hepatotoxic effects of alcohol- and the affected women seem to be even more sensitized. Binge drinking, rather than continuous drinking, does not seem to be especially associated with the development of cirrhosis. That women had drunk less alcohol during binge drinking further emphasizes this.

<http://alcalc.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/43/1/39?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=women&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&resourcetype=HWCIT>

Events

10 June 2008, Drugs and Alcohol Scotland, Braehead Arena, Glasgow

This one-day event, comprising a full and comprehensive seminar programme and a large exhibition, will provide a unique opportunity for professionals and managers involved in preventing and treating substance misuse, service users and those interested in joining the profession to come together to debate the big issues, share best practice and network. For more information: contact Pavilion on 0870 890 1080 or email info@pavpub.com

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

Organised by Tayside Domestic Abuse and Substance Misuse Project, at Perth Concert Hall. Guest speakers are Dr Sarah Galvani, Professor at the University of Warwick and Marai Larasi, Executive Director of NIA Project. The event will be chaired by Lily Greenan, Manager Scottish Women's Aid. The Tayside Domestic Abuse and Substance Misuse Research Report and the Good Practice Guidelines for Partnership Working as well as other valuable resources will be launched during the conference.

For more information: contact: Irina Pelc, Tayside Domestic Abuse and Substance Misuse Project, Dundee City Council, 1 Shore Terrace, Dundee, DD1 3AH. Tel: 01382 434569 or e-mail: irina.pelc@dundeecity.gov.uk

Friday, 21st November 2008, Addiction & the Family, Bristol

Topics will include: Addiction & the family, children, alcohol, illicit drugs, risk taking, young people, adults, older adults resilience, bridging the research/practice/policy divides, treatment options & behavioural couple's therapy. Speakers & Chairpersons will include: Colin Bradbury, Douglas Cameron, Alex Copello, Vivienne Evans, Henk Garretsen, Michael Klein, Tim O'Farrell, Jim Orford, Martin Plant, Moira Plant, Don Shenker, Lorna Templeton & Richard Velleman. For more information contact: Mrs Jan Green, Alcohol & Health Research Unit, University of the West of England, Blackberry Hill, Bristol BS16 1DD, United Kingdom. Tel: 0117 328 8800 Fax: 117 328 8900; E-mail: Jan.Green@uwe.ac.uk

Resources

Alcohol Debate - Scotland

The Scottish Government has just launched its '**Alcohol Debate**'. The aim of the debate is to get Scots to think about the impact of alcohol misuse, recognising the relevance to themselves on a personal level, so they too can understand the scale of the problem. The alcohol debate website (www.alcoholdebate.com) is aimed at everyone, but the two target groups are women and parents. The themes are:

Women

- The link to breast cancer
- The impact on fertility
- Vulnerability when drunk
- Negative impact on relationships
- Impact on weight, appearance and ageing

Parents

- Setting an example of drinking behaviour to children
- Sacrificing quality time with children because of ill-effects of alcohol
- Would you let your babysitter drink?
- Risk-taking behaviour children get involved in through drinking alcohol
- How easy it is for our children to access alcohol.

Have a look at the site and feel free to post your views <http://www.alcoholdebate.com>

Drinkaware.co.UK – women's drink calculator

http://www.drinkaware.co.uk/index.php?option=com_drinkscalc&gender=f&Itemid=45

Diploma in Women's Studies, Stow College, Glasgow

"Are you looking for an interesting, challenging qualification offered on a part-time basis? Stow College's Diploma in Women's Studies course is the only course of its kind in the UK and offers a unique insight into gender issues in the 21st century." Entry is by informal interview.

For more information: email Pam Currie at pcurrie@stow.ac.uk. For a prospectus and application form, contact Student Services on 0141 332 1786.

The Essential Guide to Drugs and Alcohol

First published in 1982 as Drug Abuse Briefing, this publication is celebrating 25 years of providing a 'Cooks Tour' around the UK drug scene. Now fully updated in our new Essential series, it covers all the main drugs used including alcohol and tobacco, giving the basic facts and figures together with important background information on the drug and alcohol treatment system and drug field 'jargon'. With so many new people involved in drugs work, the Essential Guide to Drugs and Alcohol really is essential reading for new staff, vocational training, drug awareness courses and general interest.

<http://www.hit.org.uk/publications.asp#189>

Network News

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

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

The next GINA newsletter will be distributed in June 2008.

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