

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH HIGHER RISK ALCOHOL USE IN OLDER ADULTS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM IN 2015

S Wadd¹, L Elliott², I Madoc-Jones³, M Donnelly⁴, A Whittaker⁵ Substance Misuse and Ageing Research Team, University of Bedfordshire, Luton, England, ²Glasgow Caledonian University, Glasgow, Scotland, ³Wrexham Glyndwr University, Wrexham, Wales, ⁴Queen's University, Belfast, Northern Ireland, ⁵Edinburgh Napier University, Edinburgh, Scotland.

Introduction and Aims: The World Health Organisation has identified alcohol-related harm among older adults as an increasing concern. The aim of this study was to identify factors associated with higher risk drinking in older adults.

Design and Methods: A self-complete postal survey of people aged 50 and over registered at 30 general medical practices across the UK. Participants were categorised as higher risk if they had an AUDIT score ≥ 16 . Multivariate (logistic) regression analysis was carried out to determine what factors were associated with being a higher risk drinker.

Results: A total of 16,678/76,342 (22%) completed questionnaires were returned. Amongst those who drank alcohol, 3% (n=280) were higher risk drinkers. Almost half (49%) drink more now than they used to. 1 in 4 (20%) said they hadn't sought help or advice for their drinking since their 50th birthday, but would have liked help or advice. Having adjusted for age and gender, factors associated with being a heavy drinker included being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (OR 2.86; 1.40-5.85) and being less likely to engage in fulfilling activities (OR 4.30; 3.24-5.7), to get emotional support from family (OR 3.26; 2.47-4.30), to be proud of the community they live in (OR 2.42; 1.86-3.15) or to be coping with stresses in life (OR 5.22; 3.86-7.05).

Discussion and Conclusions: Enhancing coping strategies, improving social networks and social capital and ensuring that older adults have opportunities to participate in a range of activities that enhance wellbeing could reduce alcohol-related harm in older drinkers.