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January 2010

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Alcohol use and psychosocial correlates among aborigines in Central Penisular Malaysia

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Objective : – To determine the prevalence of alcohol abuse/dependence, psychiatric morbidity and psychosocial correlates among Malaysian aborigines

Methods : Household survey with informed consent taken. All orang asli (Aborigines) age 18 and above were interviewed in Pulau Carey areas. Alcohol Screening used AUDIT questionnaires and psychiatric morbidity measured by MINI. Only those with moderate to severe alcohol problem (score 8 and above) proceed with MINI for psychiatric morbidity. Odds ratio was used as measures of the association for the variables. The data analysis was done using SPSS version 16.

Results : 183 orang asli were interviewed during the study. Majority are within age group of 18–35 years of age (54.1%) with the mean age 37.26 years old. The M:F (54.1% and 45.9 %). Senoi ethnic group is the majority (97.8 %). 11% has no formal education and 65% received primary school education. Majority are married (75.4%). One third of them are employed and almost half received less than RM500 monthly (USD150). Types of alcohol use mainly home made tuak and samsu. 94% have AUDIT score less than 7. Among those with AUDIT score more than 7 (N=10), 8 orang asli fulfilled criteria for alcohol dependence syndrome, 1 for depression, 1 for dystymia, 1 agorophobia, 1 anti-social personality disorder, and 1 for suicidal ideation (mild). None of them fulfilled criteria for other substance use. The age, gender and occupation are closely associated with alcohol problems (AUDIT score>7). However, multivariate analysis showed only gender factor was significantly associated with alcohol problems, Odds ratio= 52.90, 95% CI (10.86–257.75), p<0.001.

Conclusion : Prevalence of alcohol use among orang asli is comparable with general population. Male gender is significantly associated with moderate to high level of alcohol use. The male orang asli probably need more attention on awareness program and further interventions.