

Alcohol use amongst the Nepalese in the UK

We found the Editorial 'Alcohol use in South Asians in the UK is under-recognised, and alcohol related harm is disproportionately high' a timely contribution to the debate on the health of South Asians in the UK [1]. Pannu et al. argue that the degree and pattern of alcohol use among UK South Asians varies greatly.

We published a lifestyle study conducted among one particular group of South Asians living in the UK, namely Nepalese migrants [2]. One of the first stumbling block we came across in planning the study was that there is, of course, currently no way of identifying Nepalese migrants for a national study as there is no central registration or database. From different sources we estimated the Nepalese population in the UK to be between 80,000 and 100,000; these include retired or currently serving Gurkha soldiers, businessmen, students and other immigrants. To get a fairly representative sample of Nepalese migrants in the absence of a formal sampling frame: (i) we contacted Nepalese community leaders in different cities to explore whether they maintained a list of Nepalese living in their area or asked about the possible community gatherings where large number of people could be met such as the Nepali New Year celebration; and (ii) contacts were made through Nepalese language media: such as a press-release in a local newspaper Sandesh (based in Peterborough), and a broadcast via the British Forces Broadcasting Services (BFBS) Gurkha radio to invite Nepalese immigrants to participate in the survey. These routes of recruitment interestingly overlap with the type of media suggested by Pannu and colleagues for distributing targeted health promotion interventions to South Asians [1].

Our lifestyle study (n=327) found that 60.9% of Nepalese respondents consumed alcohol and that alcohol use was associated with gender, age and smoking were significantly associated with alcohol consumption in multivariate analysis. Males were ten times more likely to be alcohol users than females (OR = 9.7, 95% CI = 5.1 to 18.3). Similarly individuals who were between 30–45 years were equally likely to drink as individuals older than 45, whereas those younger than 30 years were less likely to consume alcohol (OR = 0.4, 95% CI = 0.1 to 0.9). Alcohol consumption was significantly associated with smoking in the multivariate analysis. Alcohol drinkers were seven times more likely to be smokers than non-drinkers (OR = 7.4, 95% CI = 2.6 to 21.4).

Finally, we observed that the overall alcohol consumption rate of both Nepalese men and women in the UK (74% for males and 21% for females) was considerably higher than the overall alcohol consumption in Nepal (male 33.6%; female 15.3%) [3].

References

1. Pannu, G. Zaman, S., Bhala, N., Zaman, R. (2009) Alcohol use in South Asians in the UK is under-recognised, and alcohol related harm is disproportionately high (editorial), *BMJ* ;339:b4028
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3. World Health Organization (2004) World Health Survey, Nepal 2003: Global InfoBase: alcohol.

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