

Oa Frequency of alcohol-associated injury in adults presenting to a Ghanaian emergency department

Abstract

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Background Injuries are the cause of almost 6 million deaths every year, with 15-20% of these associated with alcohol use. However, the frequency of alcohol-associated injury varies widely between countries, but is unknown in Ghana. In this cross-sectional chart review, we aimed to measure the frequency of alcohol-associated injury in adults who presented to an emergency department in Kumasi, Ghana.

Methods We reviewed the records of consecutive injured patients 18 years or older who presented to the Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital (KATH) emergency department for care within 8 h of injury. We excluded patients who had blood in their mouth that interfered with alcohol testing, minor injuries that resulted in referral to a separate outpatient clinic, and patients who died before admission. We recorded alcohol test results, and patient and injury characteristics.

Findings Between November, 2014, and April, 2015, 2 488 injured adults presented to the emergency department and we included 1085 (43%) in this study. Median pre-hospital time was 2 h (IQR 1-4h); Median age was 33 years (IQR 26-42 years), 756 (70%) of patients included in the study were men, and 557 (51%) were involved in road traffic incidents. 35% (n=382) of the study population tested positive for alcohol. We noted high rates of alcohol positivity in certain sub-groups such as men (756 total; 42% positive), those aged 25-44 years (626; 40%), drivers (156; 42%), pedestrians (204; 42%), people who had been assaulted (166; 49%), the seriously injured (311; 40%); and patients who died in the emergency department (15; 53%).

Interpretation The frequency of alcohol-associated injury was 35% in patients in this Ghanaian tertiary hospital emergency department. Our findings support the practice of routine alcohol testing of injured patients in the KATH emergency department and have implications for health policy, emergency department based interventions, and acute care.

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Declaration of interests No conflicts of interest are declared.