

Features of the alcohol initiation and the subsequent attitude to it of the future doctors

Cechy inicjacji alkoholowej i jej postrzeganie przez przyszłych lekarzy

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Wstęp. Problem konsumpcji alkoholu wśród młodzieży na Białorusi staje się coraz poważniejszy.

Cel. Określenie mechanizmu inicjacji alkoholowej wśród młodzieży oraz ustalenie czynników wpływających na ten proces.

Materiał i metody. W 2009 roku 577 studentów pierwszego roku kierunku lekarskiego Uniwersytetu Medycznego w Grodnie zostało zbadanych za pomocą kwestionariusza opartego na "Kwestionariuszu ankiety dotyczącej konsumpcji napojów alkoholowych i aktywności fizycznej" (2006) w Zakładzie Higieny Uniwersytetu Medycznego w Poznaniu.

Wyniki. Badania wykazały, że 94,3% studentów pierwszego roku miało kontakt z alkoholem na własne życzenie. Średni wiek inicjacji to $14,7 \pm 0,46$ lat. Większość badanych po raz pierwszy piła alkohol (najczęściej szampana lub wino) podczas rodzinnych uroczystości. Częściej (44%) młodzież próbowała alkoholu z własnej inicjatywy. Około 7,5% badanych wyrażało żal z powodu inicjacji alkoholowej (poczucie winy, kłótnia z rodzicami, dyskomfort psychiczny). Co dziewięćdziesiąty student pił alkohol w szkole. Ponad połowa badanych piła alkohol w ostatnich 30 dniach poprzedzających badanie. 26,3% piło piwo, 13,3% – wino, 8,1% – wódkę. Jedna trzecia studentów piła alkohol 1-2 razy w ostatnim miesiącu, 5,4% – 3-4 razy w miesiącu, 10,7% – raz w tygodniu. Na pytanie o przyczynę sięgania po alkohol jedna trzecia studentów odpowiedziała: «dla relaksu» lub «z okazji świąt rodzinnych»; co piąty – «dla towarzystwa», co dziesiąty – «dla spełnienia ważnego toastu» lub – «ponieważ jest to przyjemne». Najczęstszą negatywną konsekwencją (u prawie co ósmej osoby badanej) konsumpcji alkoholu była inicjacja palenia tytoniu. Zachowania, których później żałowano, zostały wywołane działaniem alkoholu u 11,8% studentów. Jedna trzecia badanych (33,4%) żałowała, że piła alkohol. Dwie trzecie wymieniały konsekwencje picia alkoholu. Mimo to, jedynie jedna czwarta badanych ogranicza konsumpcję.

Wnioski. Konieczne jest opracowanie i wdrożenie metod zapobiegających kontaktowi młodzieży z alkoholem, przy współpracy z rodziną.

Słowa kluczowe: młodzież, alkohol, środki zapobiegawcze

Introduction. The problem of alcohol consumption among youth gets increasingly urgent in the Republic of Belarus.

Aim. To specify the mechanism of youth familiarizing with alcohol and to establish the factors influencing this process.

Material & method. 577 first-year students of medical faculty of the Grodno State Medical University were surveyed in 2009 with the questionnaire developed on the basis of "Kwestionariusz ankiety dotyczącej konsumpcji napojów alkoholowych i aktywności fizycznej" (A questionnaire survey on alcohol consumption and physical activity) (2006) prepared at the Department of Hygiene, Poznan University of Medical Sciences.

Results. It was established that 94.3% of the first-year students had experience with alcohol used at their own inclination. Average age of the first use was $14,7 \pm 0,46$ years. The majority of teenagers took alcohol for the first time (more often champagne, wine) at their homes, during family celebrations. More often (44%) teenagers tried alcohol of their own initiative. About 7,5% of the students regretted alcohol initiation (because of feeling of shame, quarrel with parents, physiological discomfort). Every ninth-tenth student drank an alcoholic drink at school. More than a half of the surveyed took an alcoholic drink within the last 30 days preceding the study. For 26,3% of the students it was beer, for 13,3% – wine, for 8,1% – vodka. One third of the students took alcohol 1-2 times within the last month, 5,4% – several times a month (3-4 times), 10,7% – once a week. To the question about the reasons of alcohol using, one third of the students answered: «To relax» or «Because of the family holidays»; every fifth – «For the company», every tenth – «For support of a good toast» or «Because it is pleasant». The most frequent negative consequence (almost in every eighth subject) of the alcohol use was the initiation of smoking. Actions which the teenagers subsequently regretted were provoked by alcohol in 11,8% of the first-year students. One third of the subjects (33,4%) regretted they drank. Two thirds reflected on consequences of alcohol consumption. Despite it, only one fourth of the students limit alcohol use.

Conclusion. Working out and introducing preventive measures against youth familiarizing with alcohol, in cooperation with a family, are necessary.

Key words: teenagers, alcohol, preventive measures

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Introduction

The problem of teenagers' and youth's health is sharply actual in the Republic of Belarus because of the demographic crisis. According to some data the teenagers of rural areas are in a rather adverse position in comparison with the city inhabitants (in particular, in relation to smoking) [1].

At the same time, the results of the research in Russia have shown that the process of teenagers familiarizing with psychoactive substances is influenced more likely not by a place of residence, but by the social and economic status of the family [2]. Social stereotypes of youth environment also change. Smoking, drinking beer and light alcoholic drinks have become the modern attributes of teenagers [3, 4]. At the same time, lifelong social skills, including health-oriented skills and peculiarities of health-related behavior – formed at teen age, subsequently influence health quality of life [5]. Therefore the studies aiming to reveal the mechanism of youth familiarizing with psychoactive substances are of high priority in Belarus.

Aim

With the objective to specify the mechanism of youth familiarizing with alcohol, to establish which factors influence this process.

Materials and methods

577 first-year students of medical faculty of the Grodno State Medical University were surveyed in 2009. The questionnaire was developed on the basis of «Kwestionariusz ankiety dotyczącej konsumpcji napojów alkoholowych i aktywności fizycznej» (A questionnaire survey on alcohol consumption and physical activity) (2006) prepared by Aneta Klimberg of the Department of Hygiene, Poznan University of Medical Sciences [6, 7].

Results

Social-economic status

The age of the surveyed students fluctuated from 16 till 27 years. 58% of the first-year students were 17 years old at the moment of the study, 33% – were 18 years old.

Among the first-year students there were 116 boys (20%), 461 girls (80%).

Every fifth first-year student lived in Grodno before entering the University, about 69.3% are city-dwellers.

The accommodation conditions of the first-year students were as follows: the majority (67.2%) lived in a rented room, almost 23% – in their own apartment,

4.3% – in a hostel of a corridor type, about 2.5% – in a hostel block (small-family type), the same percentage – at home.

Mother had higher education in almost a half of the surveyed (47.9%), in 30% – the mother's education was professional, in 20.7% – average. Father's higher education was noted in 42.2% of the students, in 34% – professional, in 20.7% – average.

Approximately 44.7% of the first-year students estimated the family financial position as good, 40.5% – as average, 10.3% – as very good, 2.4% – as difficult, about 1.7% – as very difficult. Less than 1% of the first-year medical students could not estimate the family financial position [6, 7].

Experience of alcohol initiation

An overwhelming majority of the first-year students (94.3%) had experienced alcohol initiation. An average age of alcohol first use was 14.7 ± 0.46 years.

For almost a half of the first-year students champagne was the first spirit. Every fourth-fifth student tried beer, every fifth – wine (fig. 1). An insignificant percentage of the students chose «cocktails» or «other drink».

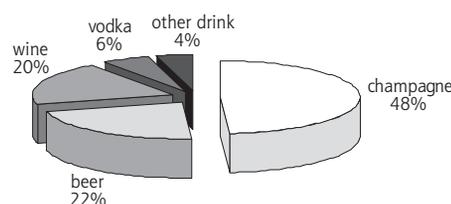


Fig. 1. The type of a first alcoholic drink of a teenager

Almost a third of the students (32.5%) as a place where they tasted alcohol for the first time, and the conditions in which it occurred, gave „home”, two thirds (66%) – “during a family celebration”, and a quarter (26%) – during the new year celebration. About 6.5% drank alcohol for the first time at a friend's (girlfriend's), 5.4% – at a wedding and in a disco accordingly, 4.5% – in the street, in a courtyard. The percentages than had chosen other variants of the answer appeared insignificant.

Alcohol was offered the teenager for the first time by a mother in 15%, by a father – in 14.5%, by a senior friend – 7.8%; smaller percentage of the first-year students answered that it were other relatives. The majority (44%) tried alcohol independently, of their own initiative.

An overwhelming majority of teenagers (89.6%) did not manifest any problems at the first taste of alcohol. Only a small amount of the subjects noted

dizziness (4.2%), nausea (2.6%), a headache (1.7%), less than 1% chose variants of the answer „vomiting”, „a cold”, „short-term loss of memory („a blackout)””. Almost 96% had problems with parents after the first taste of alcohol. Units answered: «Forbidden to go out”, „Quarrel”, „Punishment”, „Conversation».

About 7.5% of the first-year students regretted having drunk alcohol for the first time. The feeling of shame, quarrel with parents, physiological discomfort (the dream infringement, hangover, a headache) were the reasons.

Nevertheless, more than a half of the first-year students positively answered a question on whether they used any alcoholic drink within the last 30 days (fig. 2).

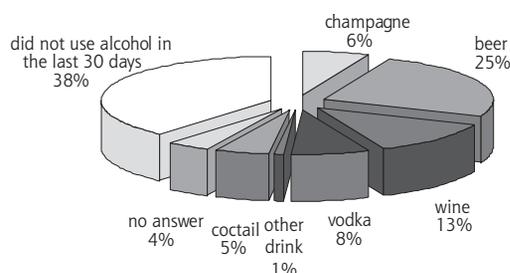


Fig. 2. The type of alcoholic drink used by first-year medical students

The frequency of alcohol use during the last month varied. More than one third did not take alcoholic drinks within the last month. Approximately 34.6% specified that they took alcohol 1-2 times a month, 5.4% – several times a month (3-4 times), 10.7% – once a week. About 3% of the students took alcoholic drinks 2 times a week and more often.

Every ninth-tenth (10.9%) of the subjects answered that they drank an alcoholic drink at school, 3.6% drank beer in the presence of the teacher, 4.2% – during a school break. About 3% drank beer directly at a shop doors.

To the question on the reasons of alcohol using 32.5% answered: «To relax», 29.9% – «Because of family holidays»; 20.2% – «For the company», 10.4% – «For support of a good toast», 10.2% – «Because it is pleasant», 8.7% – «For more entertainment». About 4.3% of the students chose the answer variants: «For health», or «To note the success of employment». About 3.8% took alcohol «To forget problems». Other variants of the answer were specified by the units («To feel adult», «To note sports success», «I like alcohol», «Because of failures at university», «Because I cannot say no», «because I wish to resemble parents», «To be brave», «Because a friend drinks».

To the question whether the use of alcohol ever led to a stay in a sobering chamber or a hospital, less

than 1% of the first-year students answered positively. There were no answers about the situation when alcohol had led to a drug test. Therefore, almost every eighth alcohol use case led to tobacco smoking. In 8.6% – to a memory blackout (as a rule, unitary), at 5.5% – to memory problems. Less than 1% were rejected when seeking employment, having received a bad assessment. Almost 4% specified a cold. About 3.1% – a casual sexual contact.

As a whole, actions which the subjects subsequently regretted were provoked by alcohol in 11.8% of the first-year students, problems with law enforcement reported 1.4% of the first-year medical students. Scandal, quarrel in a family as a consequence of alcohol consumption was noted in 8.3% of the cases; physical violence, runaway from home were noted in less than 1% of the cases. About 1.6% of the surveyed drove a car under the influence of alcohol, 4.8% rode a bicycle, a motorcycle – 2.1%. Violence from the drunk person observed about 3.8% of the first-year students. Almost every tenth was ever in the car driven by a drunk driver. Less than 1% of the first-year students specified they had an accident because of alcohol use.

One third of the students (33.4%) regretted they ever drank. Two thirds (about 62.5%) reflected on consequences of alcohol use. Almost 10% – at physiology course, 9.5% – «When there is no money», about 9.3% have specified the regret «When I drink much». The following answers were a little bit less frequent: «After memory blackouts», «When I was ill», „Next morning”, „Next day”, «When friends get drunk», «When I see drunk people», «After a quarrel», «After anti-alcoholic advertising», «When I think of future children», «After night-school students», «When it was bad», «When an acquaintance died from alcohol», «When I think about health», «When I look at myself».

Despite the regret, only a quarter of the subjects limit alcohol use, about 7% «Take less alcohol than friends». The first-year students answered the question why they continued to take alcoholic drinks: «So it turns for the better», «To relax», «For the company», «On holidays», «Because it is pleasant». About 3,6% of the first-year students would like to experience abstinence.

About 43.6% of the subjects ever met with anti-alcoholic advertising, 42% – the criticism of alcohol use, 41.7% – an anti-alcoholic instruction, 25.3% – an anti-alcoholic poster. Only 7.6% answered that «they did not meet with anything similar».

Of almost (9.3%) of the first-year students every tenth smoked. Half of the smokers smoked fewer than 5 cigarettes a day, a quarter – from 6 to 10 cigarettes, the others – more than 10 cigarettes a day. Almost 3% of the subjects ever used drugs [6, 7].

Discussion

The received results show that the overwhelming majority of the students both from urban (98%) and rural areas (96%) had the experience of alcoholic drinks use. Average age of alcohol first use fell to the period before the University. Irrespective of the place of residence (city, village) it made approximately 14.7 years.

For every second teenager – champagne, for every third – wine or beer – became the first alcoholic drink. In rural areas vodka was a little bit more frequently drunk as the first alcoholic drink: 10% of the rural teenagers and 6% - of the urban teenagers ($\chi^2=3.22$, $p=0.07$).

Irrespective of the place of residence, teenagers tried alcohol at home, celebration of a new year being the most frequent. The lowest percentage of the first-year students tried alcohol for the first time in the street, in a court yard (about 6-7%, without the distinctions between city and village).

The teenagers living in a city tried alcohol for the first time more often with the approval of parents (26% of the first-year urban students, and 17% – of the rural students specified that parents were those who offered them alcohol for the first time), friends (21.7% of the urban students and 14% of the rural students). At the same time, rural teenagers tried alcohol out of their own initiative more often: 53% of the first-year rural students and 43% of the urban students.

The first use of alcoholic drinks in the overwhelming majority of the subjects did not lead to any unpleasant consequences. Only 11% of the rural and 10% of the urban first-year students regretted having had alcoholic drinks for the first time. The reasons were the following: for urban students – dizziness (6%), quarrel with parents (4%), nausea and a headache (3%), short-term memory loss (1%). In the rural respondents, after the first use of alcohol, nausea and dizziness were noted in 5%, a headache – in 6%, vomiting – in 1.3%, and for 5% of the rural subjects the first use of spirits led to a quarrel with parents.

Every ninth-tenth (10.9%) student answered that they drank an alcoholic drink at school.

A problem of the excessive use of alcohol in a family was faced by about 10% of the surveyed first-year students. For every tenth student the use of alcohol by one of a family members led to a quarrel or a scandal; 1% of the urban students escaped from home because of family violence provoked by alcohol.

More than a half of the students used at least one kind of an alcoholic drink within the last 30 days. City youth preferred beer: 57% of the first-year urban students compared to 37% of the rural students; rural

students preferred wine (28% of the urban students and 37% – of the rural students), or vodka (15% of the urban students and 24% of the rural students).

Champagne appeared to be the most frequently used alcohol for the initiation and the most seldom used drink at the moment of the questionnaire data gathering.

The frequency of alcohol use within the last month preceding the questionnaire survey did not manifest a statistically significant dependence on the place of residence before entering the University. One third of the first-year students took alcohol 1-2 times within the last month, 5.4% – several times a month (3-4 times), 10.7% – once a week.

To the question about the reasons of alcohol use, every third answered: «To relax», or «Because of family holidays»; every fifth – «For the company», every tenth – «For support of a good toast» or «Because it is pleasant to me». A small part of the first-year students (3% of whom were rural students) answered that they take alcohol because of failures at the University.

The most frequent negative consequence of alcohol drinking (almost in every eighth subject) was the tobacco smoking initiation. Actions which the teenagers subsequently regretted were provoked by alcohol in 11.8% of the first-year students.

The consequences of alcohol use, according to answers of the first-year students, were not statistically significant for city and village, except for such cases as sexual contact, more often specified by the urban students (6% of the urban students and 1.3% of the rural students, $\chi^2 = 5.53$, $p=0.02$). At the same time, the rural students were exposed to violence from a drunk person more often (8% of the rural students and 3.6% of the urban students, $\chi^2 = 4.2$, $p=0.04$).

One third of the students (33.4%) regretted they ever drank. Two thirds (about 62,5%) reflected on consequences of alcohol consumption. Despite it, only one fourth of the subjects limit alcohol use.

Conclusions

The majority of young people entering University are familiar with alcohol. The alcohol initiation occurs at teen age, more often – under the influence of a family, parents, and also friends. Rural teenagers are inclined to taste alcohol for the first time of their own initiative. High distribution of light alcoholic drinks use is characteristic for students. Beer becomes the most often used drink for the first-year students.

The results of research confirm that the measures directed on decrease of alcohol use among teenagers and of alcohol availability for youth are highly actual for the Republic of Belarus. The prohibition of alcoholic products and tobacco advertising, the

recognition of beer as an alcoholic product with all the negative consequences of its use for the young generation, are necessary.

In spite of the fact that the sale of spirits to the minors is forbidden legislatively, teenagers try alcohol

from the hands of parents. Hence, the measures on work with a family are necessary. For this purpose a change of social standards is necessary: formation of a healthy way of life, a public condemnation of drunkenness.

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