

# Analysis of alcohol consumption in adolescents from a health area

## Abstract

**Background:** Alcohol consumption and its toxic consequences in adolescents is an essential element in current healthcare work from the health professionals themselves. Objective: to analyze alcohol consumption in adolescents from a health area.

**Methods:** A descriptive, cross-sectional study was conducted in a health area, where from a population of 80 there was a sample of 41 adolescents with alcohol consumption belonging to the “José Ramón León Acosta” polyclinic in Santa Clara. Empirical and statistical methods, open interview and review of individual medical records were used.

**Results:** the group predominated between 12 and 15 years (78%) with an average starting age of 14.2±1.7 years. The male sex began to manifest addiction at younger ages with respect to the female sex ( $p=0.031$ ). The most common reason was group contagion (97,6%) and the presence of low tolerance to frustrations (75,6%). The most frequent route of initiation was sociocultural (39%) followed by those who use the hedonic route as a way of seeking pleasure among their peers (24,4%). Both sexes behave similarly in terms of the reasons for alcohol consumption and the initiation pathway ( $p>0.05$ ).

**Conclusions:** Alcohol consumption in adolescence is a real health problem. Adolescents initiate alcohol consumption at increasingly younger ages, mainly the male sex. It is very important to carry out health actions to prevent this toxic substance.

**Keywords:** adolescence, alcoholism, prevention, toxic substance, frustrations

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## Introduction

Adolescence as a period of human development has been the subject of attention of social scientists and international bodies, who have tried to define its limits, as well as the characteristics that define this stage.<sup>1</sup> Adolescence is a complex stage of transition between childhood and adulthood, in which the individual feels a member and participates in an “age culture” characterized by its own behaviors, values, norms, slang, spaces and fashions.<sup>2</sup> Alcoholism is a disease caused by the abusive consumption of alcoholic beverages and by the addiction that this habit creates. The figures of adolescents and young consumers increase every year.<sup>3</sup> Prevention is an important resource within society to prevent different evils from reaching or expanding. This term is defined as actions aimed at the eradication, elimination and minimization of the impact of the disease and disability; It includes social, political, economic and therapeutic measures.<sup>4</sup> It is a reality teenagers, parties and alcoholic beverages are related, it is not about absolutizing, but neither can one deny vulnerability, the risk to which they are exposed, and, therefore, the most significant efforts in the fight against toxic substances should be directed towards prevention.<sup>5</sup> The World Health Organization, cited by Vignolo et al.,<sup>6</sup> states that primary prevention strategies may be aimed at prohibiting or reducing the exposure of the individual to the harmful factor, up to levels not harmful to health.

At present, there are insufficiencies in community care work to address the problem of alcohol consumption in adolescents, which led to the present study aimed at solving the following scientific problem: What are the characteristics of alcohol consumption in adolescents from a health area belonging to the “José Ramón León Acosta de Santa Clara” polyclinic? The general objective is to characterize alcohol consumption in adolescents from a health area in Cuba.

## Methods

A descriptive, cross-sectional study was carried out in a health area, belonging to the “José Ramón León Acosta” polyclinic of Santa Clara municipality, in the period from January 2016 to December 2017. 80 adolescents who consumed alcohol were studied, and the simple random sampling without replenishment probabilistic technique was used for the sample selection. It was constituted by 41 adolescents, who were previously informed consent, as well as their guardians to participate in the study.

### Methods of the theoretical level

**Synthetic analytical:** It made possible the interpretation of each one of the studied texts, to conform the criterion assumed in the epígrafes and paragraphs, as well as to particularize in the data obtained in the surveys to integrate them and to establish the corresponding generalizations.

**Inductive-deductive:** It facilitated going from the particular to the general in each of the analyzes carried out in the theoretical study and in the processing of the obtained information.

**Generalization:** It allowed the establishment of the regularities that were revealed in the study carried out.

### Methods of the empiric level

**Open interview:** Contributed to identify the beginning and pathways of early alcohol consumption in adolescents.

**Individual clinical histories:** It made it possible to provide information on various personal aspects.

The selection criteria were the following:

## Inclusion approaches

- All adolescents with previous consumption of alcoholic beverages.
- That they reside in the health area belonging to a health area and are dispensed.

## Exclusion approaches

- Adolescents whose legal guardians do not give consent to participate in the investigation.
- The following variables were used from the data obtained: age, sex, alcohol consumption reasons and initiation pathways.

## Collection of information

In order to carry out the research, the documentary review and individual clinical histories were used as techniques in order to obtain extended information.

## Statistical processing

The information was stored in a data file in SPSS version 21.0 and is presented in tables and statistical graphs, for the description the arithmetic mean, standard deviation, absolute frequencies and percents were calculated. In the analysis we used a comparison test of two proportions and a comparison of means for independent samples through Epidat 4.2. We worked with levels of significance of 5%.

## Process

To begin the development of the research, a bibliographic review was made with the use of the database by Pubmed of the subject with a thorough analysis of the most relevant aspects in the Cuban environment as well as at an international level.

## Results

As can be seen in Table 1 referring to age of onset in alcohol consumption and sex, the group predominated between 12 and 15 years (78%) with an average starting age of  $14.2 \pm 1.7$  years. There is a relationship in terms of the average age of onset in alcohol consumption with respect to sex, finding that in the female sex is  $15.2 \pm 1.8$  years and in the male sex of  $13.8 \pm 1.6$  years, so it can be affirmed that the male sex begins to manifest addiction at younger ages ( $p=0.031$ ). Table 2 refers to the reason for alcohol consumption according to sex, where it was appreciated that the most common reason was the group contagion given in a typical camaraderie code of this psychological age represented by moral autonomy norms (97,6%), followed by the presence of low tolerance to frustrations (75,6%) and thirdly experiencing family conflicts with 70,7%. It is important to highlight that adolescents who feel depressed have a high probability of consuming alcohol as aversive way which was reflected in the present work, where 68,3% of the subjects admitted that they had done it for causes of situational depression. When analyzing the percentage of adolescents for each of the reasons by sex, no statistically significant differences were found according to the results of the comparison test of two proportions for independent samples ( $p>0.05$ ). Table 3 shows a predominance of the path of sociocultural initiation represented by 39% of the sample, followed by those who use the hedonic route as a way of seeking pleasure among their peers (24,4%). It must be clarified that adolescents are spoken of where the ages range from 12 to 18 years, which obey an emotional instability typical of age. There are no significant differences in sex ( $p>0.05$ ).

**Table 1** Distribution of adolescents according to age in alcohol consumption

Age of alcohol consumption	Sex					
	Female		Male		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
12-15	8	66,7	24	82,8	32	78,0
16-18	4	33,3	5	17,2	9	22,0
Total	12	100,0	29	100,0	41	100,0
Media $\pm$ DE	15,2 $\pm$ 1,8		13,8 $\pm$ 1,6		14,2 $\pm$ 1,7	

Test of comparison of means. Independent samples  $t=2,458$ ,  $p=0,031$ , source: Epidat Database

**Table 2** Distribution of adolescents according to reasons of alcohol consumption and sex

Reasons for alcohol consumption	Sex						Z Value-p
	Female		Male		Total		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Group contagion	11	91,6	29	100,0	40	97,6	Z=0,464 p=0,645
Low tolerance for frustrations	9	75,0	22	75,9	31	75,6	Z=0,341 p=0,733
Family problems	8	66,7	21	72,4	29	70,7	Z=0,009 p=0,993
Situational depression	8	66,7	20	68,7	28	68,3	Z=0,225 p=0,822
By acceptance	5	41,7	14	48,3	19	46,3	Z=0,042 p=0,966
By avoidance of rejection	-	-	3	7,3	3	7,3	Z=0,498 p=0,618

Test comparison of two proportions. Independent samples, source: Epidat Database

**Table 3** Distribution of adolescents according to routes of initiation for alcohol consumption by sex

Start paths	Sex						Z Value-p
	Female		Male		Total		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Sociocultural	2	16,7	14	48,3	16	39,0	Z=1,536 p=0,645
Hedonic	4	33,3	6	20,7	10	24,4	Z=0,458 p=0,646
Evasion	2	16,7	7	24,1	9	22,0	Z=0,111 p=0,911
Aversive	4	33,3	2	6,9	6	14,6	Z=0,693 p=0,090
Total	12	100,0	29	100,0	41	100,0	

Test comparison of two proportions. Independent samples, source: Epidat Database

## Discussion

In the study, the average age of adolescents ( $14.2 \pm 1.7$ ) who started alcohol consumption was similar to that of Mexican students.<sup>12</sup> In Cuba, a study conducted in Havana during 2012 found a higher percentage of alcoholics than what was suggested by the analysis of the health situation.<sup>6</sup> The results of the present investigation reflect this reality. While Cuban adolescents reported relatively low alcohol

consumption, most began drinking before age 16 and frequently answered that they did so for fun or to relieve stress and feel relaxed influenced by a group contagion. The early age at the start of alcohol consumption also indicates systematic violations of the regulations regarding alcohol, specifically, of ministerial resolution 334 of 2004 of the Ministry of Domestic Trade of Cuba that prohibits the sale of alcoholic beverages to children under 16 years of age, in any type of establishment, public or private, regardless of whether it is in pesos or freely convertible currency.<sup>7</sup> From the results it was evident that the incidence of alcoholism tends to increase in Cuba because from very early ages and through dissimilar routes: social or cultural, the reality is that the trend increases both on weekdays and weekends, to which contributes the sale of beer and alcoholic beverages in free areas; The same happens with respect to the tolerance of consumption in parks and squares on holidays or weekends, despite the existing regulations.<sup>8</sup>

In the revised bibliography<sup>9</sup> it was found that those who are more likely to have alcoholism are those adolescents exposed to the sociocultural pathway, among which is the consumption of alcohol in the male sex. This approach corresponds to the results obtained in the interviews conducted with the group where they said they drink when they go out for a walk, at parties and sharing tastes and preferences with friends. As a motivation, they refer that they do it "... by group contagion", "... to be approved by the group", "... to comply with rules of friends", "... to seek group pleasure", "... to avoid family conflicts". They also argue: "... I drink because sometimes I feel sad and frustrated", which affirms the low perception of risk when taking this activity as essential for life.

The effects derived from the consumption of alcohol are not only an individual problem, but also a community one.<sup>10</sup> The centers of studies are called to favor the development of the social context; This is a strategic perspective in its corresponding expression within planning, both at the level of the teacher education system as well as that of the educational institutions themselves and their structures.<sup>11</sup> Although the risk is defined as an action that may involve a loss, each subject understands it according to their own perceptions;<sup>12</sup> reason why the authors of this article call for reflection all those involved in the adolescent's attendance, including family, schools and community factors. Previous research reveals the family consequences caused by alcoholism and the presence of rejection of these patients in families with an alcoholic member, which coincides with this investigation. In studies carried out by Sandoval Ferrer, feelings of extreme intolerance predominate, rejection of the alcoholic, guilt and shame among family members, especially on the part of the children; these results agree, in terms of family refusal, with those of this work.<sup>13</sup>

The group of friends appears as the main starting point in consumption, if reference is made to the literature, these young people started in the practice of consumption through the socio-cultural way, based on customs, shared norms and the pressure of the group given the influence on the subject, result obtained in correspondence with research found.<sup>14</sup> Usually, it is reported that the age of onset of consumption, begins in early adolescence, however, there are other authors who place it after 14 years.<sup>15</sup>

The situation described in the Cuban and Mexican contexts is not unique. For example, a Colombian study found that 85% of young people between the ages of 20 and 25 had consumed alcohol at some point in their lives. A similar percentage (80,4%) had done so in the previous year and approximately half of the young people studied in

the previous month. The percentages were higher among university students, 94,6% of them had tried alcohol and 89,7% were consumers at the time of the study.<sup>16</sup> Based on the results of this research, we worked to fulfill the main objective, which was to characterize current alcohol consumption in adolescents and provide comprehensive health care aimed at preventing this scourge from adolescence in its early stage.

## Conclusion

Alcohol consumption in adolescence is a real health problem. Adolescents initiate alcohol consumption at increasingly younger ages, mainly the male sex, by sociocultural initiation or hedonic route. The most common motive is group contagion and low tolerance to frustrations. It is very important to carry out health actions to prevent the toxic consequences caused by alcohol.

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## Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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