The Adverse Effects Of Alcoholism On Our Health

Posted on October 5, 2019

View this essay online:
https://academic-master.com/the-adverse-effects-of-alcoholism-on-our-health/

Alcohol Consumption and Its Effects on Human Health

Alcohol undeniably is one the most consumed intoxicants the world over, but despite being widely in use, it remains a physiologically and psychologically dangerous consumable product. Alcohol today accounts for more personal destruction and deaths than any other substance that is abused, however, it remains legal in most parts of the world and is easily accessible and remains supported by a worldwide industry that is more than a billion dollars worth.

Alcoholism affects vital organs of the body, including the stomach, the liver, kidneys and pancreas. Moreover, it has links to cancer as well as leads to neurological and psychological complications by affecting specific regions of the brain. It is well known to lead towards aggressive behaviour and violence, and the large number of consumers who are taking it above recommended limits highlights a grim reality and makes alcoholism a major health concern. A number of primary and secondary studies in this regard will be used to demonstrate how alcoholism can lead to a multitude of serious health problems.

Organ Damage, Disease, and the Physiological Consequences of Alcoholism

One of the primary health disorders caused by alcohol abuse is chronic and acute liver disease. A close relationship between a cumulative intake of alcohol and liver damage risks has been established (S Bellentani). A study to investigate the relationship between the type of alcoholic beverage, daily alcohol intake and drinking patterns compared to the likelihood of developing liver damage was studied in which the findings demonstrated that alcohol consumption of multiple types, either with or without meals, leads towards a higher risk of acquiring alcohol-related liver diseases. If alcohol intake increased by 30 grams per day for both sexes, there was a significant increase observed in liver disease prevalence. Multiple alcoholic beverages were more harmful than consuming a single form, and drinking without food leads, independent of the drunk amount, is associated with an increased prevalence of liver disease (S Bellentani). The personal observations I had during my experience in

dealing with alcoholics also corroborate the findings of the research. I have seen a lot of acquaintances and colleagues having regular appointments with the physician for one problem or another related to their alcohol consumption.

Many studies have established organ damage aside from the liver that results as a consequence of chronic alcohol abuse. Liver cirrhosis and chronic pancreatitis are two major diseases. Postmortem autopsy data was collected for a study with a recorded history of being alcoholics and compared to a control group that was non-alcoholics (Andrea Pace). Macroscopic observations of the liver and pancreas belonging to the two groups were conducted in the study. The findings showed a close relationship between hepatic and pancreatic injury in those patients with a history of alcoholism, with a high degree of damage to both organs observed, which established that pancreatic and liver injury were simultaneously prevalent in individuals who had a history of excess intake. I see the findings of the studies as an important reminder of the fact that even moderate yet regular consumption of alcohol leads to a decrease in longevity and see the view that alcohol helps battle life's stresses to be highly mistaken in light of these findings.

Besides direct damage to major organs, alcoholism also affects sexual function and testicular pathology, which leads to a reduction of overall sperm production in males and a reduction of the testosterone hormone that regulates these functions. It was established that testicular sperm production mechanisms were not just indirectly affected by alcohol-related liver damage but also contributed directly to the complication regardless of liver diseases. Data on 17000 patients who were treated for the last 37 years in a major Seattle hospital (Lewis H. Kuller) was collected. The findings demonstrated that it was alcohol consumption that was directly affecting spermatogenesis. Overt liver disease and testicular pathology were not directly interlinked, but both were linked independently to alcohol abuse. Hormonal changes resulting from high intake could also lead to other diseases. The findings of the study are somewhat shocking to the average consumer, but in my view, the declining fertility rates in many parts of the developed world could be linked with rising alcohol abuse, and any men affected as a result will only find alcoholism as detrimental to their self-esteem instead of helping them battle stress.

Prevention, Treatment, and the Need for Responsible Consumption

It is not just physical organs but mental health as well that gets affected by alcohol intake. Violence, hospital admissions, domestic abuse, crime and the general safety of the public are affected as a result of the adverse psychological and emotional effects alcoholism leads towards (STIR). It also lowers economic productivity and leads towards job loss, lower employability prospects, absenteeism, and increased work-related injuries. There have been studies that demonstrate that those people who are alcohol dependent are more likely to develop mental disorders than those who are less. Alcoholism, contrary to public perception, elevates the risk of anxiety or affective disorders.

Furthermore, those people who rely on alcohol to alleviate psychological distress are more likely to become addicted and dependent, therefore entering into a vicious cycle that they find difficult to get out of (NIAAA). In my view, this is one of the most important findings that I use to argue against even moderate consumption of alcohol. The prime reason I find most people use to justify their increased alcohol intake is to help them battle anxiety and stress from their daily routines. It has the reverse effect, as studies have shown.

The more serious consequences of alcoholism include developing a higher risk for stroke as well as cancer, as one study investigated in men and women between the ages of 16 and 40 years (NIAAA). A causal association has been established between cancers of the pharynx, oral cavity, larynx, liver, oesophagus, rectum, colon and breast to alcohol consumption. Cancers of the lung and pancreas are associated with it in some studies. After tobacco smoking, obesity and chronic infections, it is alcohol consumption. An increased risk of neck and head cancer has been recorded in various countries, in particular eastern and central Europe, as a prime factor. There is also genetic susceptibility that plays in increasing cancer risks in which certain genes interact with the carcinogenic action of alcohol to lead to cancer (Paolo Boffetta). I find these studies to be highly alarming since genetic susceptibility to alcohol cannot be known, and I find it to be a compelling argument that prohibits or restricts alcohol intake and access. In many countries where education or income is low, there is rampant alcohol consumption that also contributes towards social inequalities as people are not able to afford healthcare costs associated with cancers and other adverse health effects.

It is not just for adults but children and fetuses that suffer greatly as a result of alcohol consumption, especially during pregnancy. It is known to lead to adverse effects such as spontaneous abortion, fetal alcohol syndrome, premature births, low birth weights and intrauterine growth retardation. People with fetal alcohol syndrome have manifested severe mental illness in their later lives that often require psychiatric treatment and counselling (Chris Famy). I have also witnessed that controlling alcohol leads towards a vast reduction in related crimes and favours legislation in this regard by the governments, but unfortunately, not many seem interested. Alcohol continues to be widely available and is seen as a source of economic revenue generation and a tourist attraction. If we truly wish to reduce these adverse health effects and other consequences of alcoholism, then I believe that it is important to control those businesses that are responsible for supplying vast amounts of unrestricted alcohol to the public. The findings from numerous studies in medicine, physiology, psychology as well as criminology offer us compelling reasons to act before alcohol consumes us as a society.

Works Cited

Andrea Pace, Andreas de Weerth, Marc Berna, Katharina Hillbricht, Michael Tsokos, Michael Bläker, Klaus Pueschel, Ansgar W. Lohse. “Pancreas and Liver Injury Are Associated in Individuals With Increased Alcohol Consumption.” *Clinical Gastro* 7.11 (2009): 1241-1246.

Chris Famy, Ann P. Streissguth, Alan S. Unis. “Mental Illness in Adults With Fetal Alcohol Syndrome or Fetal Alcohol Effects.” *The American Journal of Psychiatry* 155.4 (1998): 552-554.

S Bellentani, G Saccoccio, G Costa, C Tiribelli, F Manenti, M Sodde, L Saveria Croc, F Sasso, G Pozzato, G Cristianini, G Brandi. “Drinking habits as cofactors of risk for alcohol induced liver damage.” *Gut* 41 (1997): 845-850. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1891602/pdf/v041p00845.pdf>.