



Focusing on screening and early detection of alcohol use disorders

“Early recognition and treatment of alcohol dependence are as essential as for cardiovascular disease. Damage to the man and his environment has generally already started and even reached an advanced stage before intervention takes place.”
 Prof Ian Banks, President,
 European Men’s Health Forum (EMHF)



Awareness Week on Alcohol Related Harm
 13 – 17 May 2013

FACTS OF THE DAY

In 1980, the WHO called for the development of adequate methods to identify hazardous drinkers before health and social consequences become pronounced. It led to the development of the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT).
 A 2008 study showed that the establishment of screening and behavioral counselling interventions in primary care to reduce alcohol misuse would lead to 176,000 quality-adjusted life years saved over the lifetime of a birth cohort of 4,000,000 men and women.

Policymakers and NGOs join together for AWARH

Today, as part of AWARH, MEP Nessa Childers (S&D, IE) hosted an event at the European Parliament on the need for an integrated EU Alcohol Strategy. The event was extremely well attended, and policy-makers, MEPs, NGOs, and healthcare professionals alike all discussed the need for an integrated, holistic approach to alcohol policy, from prevention to treatment. +

Giulio Gallo, policy officer at DG SANCO, highlighted the significant burden that alcohol-related harm places upon society and the economy, and presented the Commission’s actions and achievements in this area to date. Patricia Reilly, member of Cabinet of Commissioner for Research Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, welcomed the initiative, particularly given that May is the ‘Month of the Brain’, and therefore discussing alcohol-related harm, addiction and alcohol use disorders is of particular relevance and importance. Ms Reilly further noted that the EU will prioritise funding into research into the topic, particularly under Horizon 2020, and underlined the need for comparable data in this area. Peter Anderson, Professor at Maastricht University, presented the results of the AMPHORA project, which aims to contribute new evidence on alcohol consumption and alcohol-related harm in Europe. In particular, Professor Anderson highlighted a number of alarming statistics and interesting research findings: EU drinkers consume more than 600 times the exposure level set by the European Food Standards Authority for genotoxic carcinogens, of which ethanol is one; online alcohol marketing and alcohol branded sports sponsorship increase the likelihood that 14 year olds drink alcohol and the proportion of people in need who access treatment for their heavy drinking ranges from 1 in 25 to 1 in 4. Achim Kautz, European Liver Patients Association (ELPA), concluded the debate by outlining the priorities included in the ‘[Conclusions of the EU roundtable on an integrated approach to alcohol related harm](#)’, which have been signed by the partners of AWARH.

Tackling Alcohol-Related Harm

Tackling alcohol related harm requires the implementation of a number of measures targeted to prevention, screening, and treatment. In particular, screening is essential for timely handling of alcohol dependence and reduction of alcohol related harm. National governments should:

- Strengthen general practitioners’ incentives schemes to screen people who are at risk of having an alcohol use disorder
- Ensure and support the establishment of standardised screening including a mandatory liver enzymes test (GPT (ALT)) for patients between 20 – 60 years old
- Support the implementation of brief interventions beyond the healthcare sector (e.g. education of social services staff, drink-driving interventions by law enforcement officers, etc)

What can you do to support AWARH?

- Come and visit the **AWARH** distribution points in **Place du Luxembourg and Trône (Brussels)** and sign your commitment to address alcohol related harm in Europe
- **Tweet** your support for the Awareness Week on Alcohol-Related Harm and tell us why tackling alcohol-related harm is important to you
- Using the hashtag **#AWARH13** and share the message with your friends
- Learn more [here](#) and state your support [here](#)

If you wish to know more about the AWARH, please contact Georgina.Carr@bm.com. Burson Marsteller provides support for AWARH as consultants to Lundbeck.

Watch policymakers and experts discuss the need to prevent alcohol-related harm [here!](#)



Consequences of alcohol abuse or dependence¹

SYSTEM/CATEGORY	EARLY CONSEQUENCES	LATE CONSEQUENCES
Liver disease	Elevated liver enzyme levels	Liver cirrhosis, alcoholic hepatitis
Pancreatic disease		Acute pancreatitis, chronic pancreatitis
Cardiovascular disease	Hypertension	Stroke
Gastrointestinal problems	Gastritis, gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD)	Esophageal varices
Neurologic disorders	Headaches, blackouts	Alcohol withdrawal syndrome, seizures
Reproductive system disorders	Fetal alcohol effects, fetal alcohol syndrome	Sexual dysfunction, early menopause, spontaneous abortion
Cancers		Liver, oesophageal, larynx, pancreatic, breast (women)
Psychiatric comorbidities	Symptoms of depression, anxiety	Mood disorders, anxiety disorders
Legal problems	Traffic violations, driving while intoxicated (DUI)	Motor vehicle accidents
Employment problems	Tardiness, sick days	Job loss, chronic unemployment
Family problems	Family conflict, neglect of responsibilities	Divorce, spouse abuse, child abuse or neglect

Many of these problems may be avoided by early screening and intervention.

MONDAY 13/05	TUESDAY 14/05	WEDNESDAY 15/05	THURSDAY 16/05	FRIDAY 17/05
Message distribution at Place du Luxembourg and Trône (Brussels)	Health attachés debate: “National actions to solve a European problem: addressing alcohol related harm” hosted by the Estonian Permanent Representation to the EU + Message distribution at Place du Luxembourg and Trône (Brussels)	EP policy debate “Time for action: the need for an integrated EU Alcohol Strategy”, hosted by Nessa Childers MEP (A5G305, 12h00-14h00) + Message distribution at Place du Luxembourg and Trône (Brussels)	Message distribution at Place du Luxembourg and Trône (Brussels)	Message distribution at Place du Luxembourg and Trône (Brussels)

References:

Table: "Consequence of alcohol abuse or dependence": Burge and Shneider, Am Fam Physician, 1999, Jan 15; 59 (2): 361-370

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Rehm, J., Shield, K. et al (2012) Alcohol consumption, alcohol dependence and attributable burden of disease in Europe: potential gains from effective interventions for alcohol dependence. Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), available [here](#)

AWARH is an initiative of the **European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL)**, the **European Liver Patients Association (ELPA)**, the **European Mutual-Help Network for Alcohol-related Problems (EMNA)**, the **European Federation of Associations of Families of People with Mental Illness (EUFAMI)**, **EUROCARE**, **Alcohol Concern** and **Lundbeck**. Lundbeck is contributing to the Awareness Week on Alcohol Related Harm 2013 through in kind support services provided by Burson-Marsteller Brussels.