

Awareness Week for Alcohol Related Harm 24th – 29th November 2014

Experts call for greater awareness of alcohol related liver disease and liver cancer

Vienna, 24 November 2014 – United European Gastroenterology (UEG) is supporting the second annual Awareness Week on Alcohol Related Harm (AWARH) and calls for greater awareness of the relationship between alcohol and liver cancer. Excessive alcohol consumption can lead to liver cancer, estimated to be responsible for 746,000 worldwide deaths each year, making it the second most common cause of cancer death¹.

Europe is by far the biggest drinking region in the world. According to a new pan-European Survey of Digestive Health² commissioned by UEG, hospital admissions for alcoholic liver disease which is a key precursor to liver cancer have increased by more than 120% since 1995 in England, Scotland, Wales and Finland. These countries also have the highest incidence of alcohol related liver disease in east and north eastern European countries.

Alcohol also has a significant socio-economic impact, costing more than €155 billion annually and posing a real threat to the European healthcare system³. As a result, UEG considers alcohol and its relationship with GI diseases an urgent research priority.

UEG spokesperson and European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL) member, Professor Patrizia Burra explains, “There is a need to develop specific therapies for the treatment of patients with alcoholic liver disease, especially as it is the second leading risk factor for disease burden in Europe.”

“Excessive alcohol consumption amongst young people is also a growing concern and cost-effective prevention programmes must be implemented and novel treatments developed to enable us to tackle liver disease and reduce deaths from liver cancer across Europe,” adds Prof. Burra.

Follow UEG’s tips on how to drink safely and reduce the risk of developing liver disease and cancer:

Have 2-3 alcohol-free days a week to allow the liver time to **repair itself**.

Men: Drink **no more than 3-4 alcoholic drinks on any day** (equivalent to 852ml of beer/250ml of wine) and a **maximum of 21 drinks in any week**.

Women: Drink **no more than 2-3 alcoholic drinks on any day** (equivalent to 568ml beer/175ml of wine) and a **maximum of 14 drinks in any week**.⁴

Be symptom smart and seek medical advice if you experience pain in the lower right hand side of your ribs, general nausea and lack of energy.

Protect yourself from blood-borne viruses Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C infections which can lead to liver cancer.

Notes to Editors

About AWARH

The European Awareness Week on Alcohol Related Harm (AWARH) was initiated in 2013 to call for the renewal of the EU Alcohol Strategy. During AWARH'13, healthcare stakeholders presented the Roundtable Conclusions on Reducing Alcohol Related Harm and MEPs opened discussions on working collaboratively on the need to renew the EU Alcohol Strategy.

The week will end with the 6th European Alcohol Policy Conference in Brussels (27th and 28th November). Throughout the Conference, UEG will be present with a booth to make known the harmful impact of alcohol intake on the gastrointestinal system.

Further information about AWARH and the different activities which will take place during the week can be found at www.awarh.eu #AWARH14

About UEG

UEG, or United European Gastroenterology, is a professional non-profit organisation combining all the leading European societies concerned with digestive diseases. Together, its member societies represent over 22,000 specialists, working across medicine, surgery, paediatrics, gastrointestinal oncology and endoscopy. This makes UEG the most comprehensive organisation of its kind in the world, and a unique platform for collaboration and the exchange of knowledge. Find out more about UEG's work. Visit www.ueg.eu

Available for interview

Professor Patrizia Burra, Head Multivisceral Transplant Unit, Gastroenterology Department of Surgery, Oncology and Gastroenterology, Padova University Hospital and member of The European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL).

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Reference:

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2. United European Gastroenterology, 2014, Survey of Digestive Health across Europe http://ueg.sagepub.com/site/White_Book/White_Book.xhtml
3. WHO-Europe, 2012, Alcohol in the European Union – consumption, harm and policy approaches, http://ec.europa.eu/health/alcohol/docs/who_alcoholintheeu_2012_en.pdf
4. <https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/>