CARE OF ALCOHOL-RELATED CONDITIONS

Map 61: Rate of alcohol-related admissions per population by PCT

Directly standardised rate 2009/10

Domain 3: Helping people to recover from episodes of ill health or following injury

© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. DH 100020290. 2011
Context
Alcohol misuse is thought to cost the country £20 billion a year. In 2008, the Department of Health estimated that the cost to the NHS of alcohol-related harm was £2.7 billion at 2006/07 prices (a breakdown of these costs is shown in Table 61.1).2

Table 61.1: Cost to the NHS of alcohol-related harm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hospital inpatient and day visits:</th>
<th>Estimated cost (£ million)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Directly attributable to alcohol</td>
<td>167.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partly attributable to alcohol</td>
<td>1,022.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital outpatient visits</td>
<td>272.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accident and emergency visits</td>
<td>645.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambulance services</td>
<td>372.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GP consultations</td>
<td>102.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice nurse consultations</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependency prescribed drugs</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist treatment services</td>
<td>55.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other healthcare costs</td>
<td>54.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,704.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hospital admissions with a primary diagnosis of a condition related to alcohol consumption have increased by 37% in the last 7 years,3 and death rates doubled between 1992 and 2008.4 The conditions associated with alcohol use include injuries and trauma (some associated with alcohol-related violence or road traffic accidents), gastro-intestinal disease including liver disease, cancers, stroke, heart diseases, respiratory diseases, and co-existing mental health problems.

Magnitude of variation
For PCTs in England, the rate of alcohol-related admissions per 100,000 population ranged from 849.5 to 3114.3 (3.7-fold variation). When the five PCTs with the highest rates and the five PCTs with the lowest rates are excluded, the range is 1196.1–2903.7 per 100,000 population, and the variation is 2.4-fold.

Some or much of the variation in alcohol-related admission rates is likely to be due to differences in the rates of alcohol use across England, although other factors such as differences in coding for association with alcohol could also explain some of the variation.

Options for action
Commissioners and primary and secondary care providers need:

› To consider working on and implementing the seven “High Impact Changes”, with particular attention to numbers 4, 5, and 6, identified by the Department of Health to be the most effective actions for local areas that have prioritised a reduction in alcohol-related harm (Box 61.1; see “Resources”);
› To review the current patterns of acute service provision and ascertain whether alternatives to hospital admission are available when appropriate;
› To learn from the initiatives undertaken in other local services, such as the Alcohol Liaison Service at the Royal Free Hospital, London, as part of NHS Evidence (see “Resources”);
› To explore the opportunities for early detection within the health service;
› To develop a local alcohol treatment pathway (see “Resources”).

Box 61.1: High Impact Changes
1. Work in partnership
2. Develop activities to control the impact of alcohol misuse in the community
3. Influence change through advocacy
4. Improve the effectiveness and capacity of specialist treatment
5. Appoint an Alcohol Health Worker
6. Identification and brief advice (IBA) – provide more help to encourage people to drink less
7. Amplify national social marketing priorities

RESOURCES
› NICE Guidance CG100. Alcohol-use disorders – physical complications. http://guidance.nice.org.uk/CG100
› Alcohol Learning Centre. http://www.alcohollearningcentre.org.uk/

3 DH analysis of Hospital Episode Statistics (HES), NHS Information Centre.