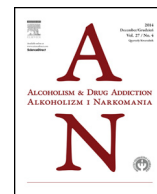


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On monitoring unrecorded alcohol consumption

*Monitoring nierejestrowanej konsumpcji alkoholu*Jürgen Rehm^{1,2,3,4,5,6,*}, Vladimir Poznyak⁷¹ Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Toronto, Canada² Addiction Policy, Dalla Lana School of Public Health, University of Toronto, Canada³ Institute of Medical Science, University of Toronto, Faculty of Medicine, Toronto, Canada⁴ Department of Psychiatry, University of Toronto, Canada⁵ Institute of Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy & Center of Clinical Epidemiology and Longitudinal Studies (CELOS), Technische Universität Dresden, Germany⁶ World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Toronto, Canada⁷ World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland

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ABSTRACT

Unrecorded alcohol consumption is a global problem, with about 25% of all alcohol consumption concerning this category. There are different forms of unrecorded alcohol, legally produced *versus* illegally produced, artisanal *vs* industrially produced, and then surrogate alcohol, which is officially not intended for human consumption. Monitoring and surveillance of unrecorded consumption is not well developed. The World Health Organization has developed a monitoring system, using the Nominal Group Technique, a variant of the Delphi methodology. Experiences with this methodology over the past two years are reported. Finally, conclusions for the monitoring and surveillance at the national level are given.

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STRESZCZENIE

Słowa kluczowe:

alkohol

spożycie *per capita*

Nierejestrowana konsumpcja alkoholu, której udział w spożyciu alkoholu ogółem wynosi około 25%, jest problemem o charakterze globalnym. Istnieje wiele źródeł konsumpcji nierejestrowanej, takie jak produkcja legalna

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*konsumpcja nierejestrowana
alkohol niespożywczy
monitoring*

i nielegalna, rzemieślnicza i przemysłowa, a także alkohol, który oficjalnie nie jest przeznaczony do spożycia. Monitorowanie tej konsumpcji jest słabo rozwinięte. Dopiero ostatnio, Światowa Organizacja Zdrowia wypracowała system monitoringu oparty na Nominalnej Technice Grupowej (Nominal Group Technique), która mieści się w szerszej kategorii metodologii delfickiej. Artykuł przedstawia doświadczenia z zastosowaniem tej metodologii zebrane w ciągu ostatnich dwóch lat oraz propozycje krajowego monitoringu konsumpcji nierejestrowanej.

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Unrecorded consumption: definition, categories and estimated size

Unrecorded consumption, referring to alcohol that is outside the usual system of governmental control because it is produced, distributed, and sold outside of formal channels and, therefore, not registered by routine data collection [1, 2], represented about 25% of all the consumption globally in the year 2012 [3]. The relative proportion is much higher in low-income than in high-income countries [3]: in fact, the relative proportion of unrecorded consumption increases almost proportionally with decreasing wealth (high-income countries: 9%; upper middle-income countries: 24%; lower middle-income countries: 42%; lower-income countries: 44%). The reasons for this relation are at least twofold: first, there is more informal traditional fermented beverages and spirits production in low- and middle-income countries [4, 5], irrespectively if such artisanal production is legal, tolerated or illegal; and second, the overall enforcement of taxation rules is lower and corruption is higher in less wealthy countries [6]. However, while this relationship between economic wealth and unrecorded consumption exists on a country level based on current data, potential measurement bias in volumes of unrecorded consumption should be acknowledged despite attempts of the World Health Organization to reduce this bias [3, 7].

As a result of high prevalence of unrecorded alcohol products, monitoring and surveillance efforts of alcohol as a major risk factor for health [7–9] need to take consumption of unrecorded alcohol into consideration, to both estimate consumption and alcohol-attributable harms, and to evaluate policy measures. Many countries are interested in knowing what proportion of overall alcohol consumption stems from unrecorded sources, and the composition of unrecorded differs widely by culture. Unrecorded alcohol comprises the following categories [1, 3, 4, 10]:

- Alcohol that is originally not produced for human consumption (such as medicinal products that contain alcohol, perfume or industrial alcohol); in some countries (*e.g.*, Russia), such surrogate alcohol may only officially be declared as not for human consumption to avoid taxes. This is the case when the respective products (*e.g.*, industrial alcohol, medicinal alcohol or perfume) are taxed at a markedly lower rate than are usual alcoholic beverages [11].
- Alcohol produced at home or artisanal (either legally or illegally).
- Alcohol that is procured from any illegal source (smuggled alcohol or industrially produced illegal alcohol).
- Alcohol that is purchased at duty free outlets or abroad, and consumed not in the jurisdiction where it is recorded.

Recorded consumption can be measured *via* sales and taxation, or *via* production, export, and import, and many national governments regularly monitor this part of alcohol *per capita* consumption [3, 12]. Harder to obtain data are required to estimate and monitor unrecorded consumption at the country level. Only a few countries, like Sweden, have regular national monitoring system of unrecorded consumption, which in Sweden had been in place for over a decade [13].

Most other countries do not monitor unrecorded consumption, and only occasionally there had been specific efforts to estimate the impact of unrecorded consumption in research studies (for an overview of studies [4]; for a systematic effort by the EU to analyse unrecorded consumption in several countries [14]). Thus, for systematic monitoring of unrecorded consumption within the WHO efforts associated with the Global strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol [7] and the Global Monitoring Framework for non-communicable diseases [15], a different

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