

# Alcohol (ab)use and health among Dutch university students

Van der Heijde CM MSc 1, Vonk P MD 1 and Meijman FJ MD, PhD 1,2

1 Department of Research, Development and Prevention, Student Health Services, University of Amsterdam

2 Department of Metamedica / Medical humanities, VU University Medical Centre, Amsterdam The Netherlands

## Introduction

- Alcohol use among students of tertiary education is on the rise worldwide regarding the prevalence, the incidence of drinking sessions and binge drinking, and closing of the gender gap in alcohol use, abuse and dependence.

- Nearly all students drink alcohol. Students drink more than non-studying peers, especially those in student societies. Binge drinking needs to be reduced because of its negative effects on health and academic performance.

- Anticipating the development of a self-regulation tool for university students, different aspects of the drinking behavior of the population are studied.

## Sample: student characteristics

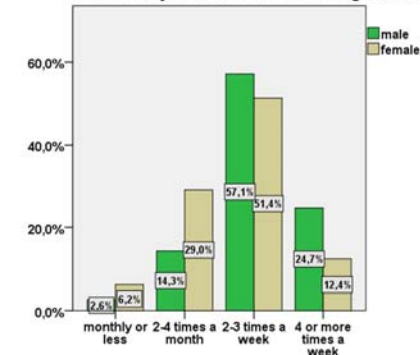
N		334
Age		23.9 (2.69)
gender	male	27%
	female	73%
Study phase	first year	12%
	bachelor	48%
	master	30%
	doctoral (old style)	4%
	Internship (medical)	6%
	PhD candidate	1%
Living situation	with parents, family,	1%
	with peers	45%
	with partner or alone	54%

## Methods

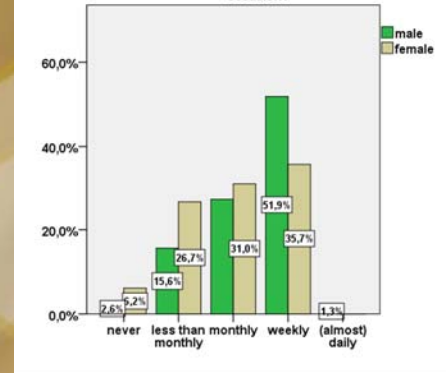
- A pilot questionnaire with questions on health, quality of life and life style (including alcohol consumption) was distributed to students in the waiting room of the Student Health Service of the University of Amsterdam (march-april 2010). Response rate: 70%.

- Alcohol use and abuse is measured with the AUDIT. Regressions of alcohol use on measures of physical and psychological health (SF-36, k-6) and academic performance (grade point average) were performed, controlling for age, gender and study phase.

How often do you have a drink containing alcohol?



How often do you have four (♂) or six (♀) or more drinks on one occasion?



## Results

In our sample of 334 Amsterdam students 96 % uses alcohol. Alcohol (ab)use is significantly and negatively ( $\beta = -.13$ ) related to general health ( $\Delta R^2 = .02$ ,  $p \leq .10$ ). And alcohol (ab)use is significantly and negatively ( $\beta = -.20$ ) related to academic performance ( $\Delta R^2 = .04$ ,  $p \leq .01$ ). No significant results were demonstrated for psychological health.

## Conclusion

Our preliminary results on alcohol use and abuse, indeed show a negative correlation with health and study results for university students. These findings support steps with regard to self-regulation of (at risk-)students, including individual feedback and a social norms intervention.

## Discussion

- In line with other studies, heavy drinking students do experience more negative health complaints, while moderate drinkers show a rather positive health profile (more positive than light drinkers).

- As academic performance concerns, light drinkers score significantly higher than heavy drinkers.

- When developing a self-regulation tool, including feedback and/ or social norms intervention, it is important to include information on the students' problem perception and readiness to change towards his/her drinking pattern.

## Reference

Boot CRL, Meijman FJ, Vonk P. (2010). Problem perception in university students using tobacco, alcohol and drugs. *Communication and Medicine*, 7(1), 33-42.

## Contact information

Student health Service,  
Oude Turfmarkt 151 1012 GC Amsterdam  
c.m.vanderheijde@uva.nl

