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ALCOHOL AND SMOKING HABITS IN AN ELDERLY POPULATION

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Background/aims: To describe the prevalence of drinking and smoking habits in an Italian population aged 75+.

A research by "Istituto Superiore della Sanità" found that drinking alcohol involves one-third of elderly over 65 years. In Italy, smoking habit in population over 65 involves 23% of men and 11% of women.

Material and methods: Cross-sectional study on a population of 462 subjects from the cohort of "The Faenza Community Aging Study" (De Ronchi, 2005). All participants were interviewed with CAMDEX-R (Cambridge Examination for Mental Disorders of the Elderly - revised).

Results: 56,7% of interviewed subjects drank alcohol (men 74.8%, women 40.8%; $p < 0,005$). Hundred and twenty-nine subjects (28,7%) were moderate drinkers (≥ 2 A.U./day).

The 20% of the drinkers (6,2% of the total population) consumed ≥ 3 alcohol units per day.

When we asked them if they consider themselves like heavy drinker, only 3,9%, (80% men) answer "yes".

The 56,9% (50,4% of the total and 58,3% women) of drinkers had symptoms of anxiety and 44,1% were affected by depression. Furthermore, among smokers the 51,1% had symptoms of anxiety and the 38% of depression.

Discussion/conclusion: Drinking and smoking habits are an increasing attitude in elderly. These un-healthy habits might have severe implications and aggravate the clinical conditions in otherwise frail persons. Our data suggest to general practitioners and policy makers to be aware of this problem to actively investigate drinking and smoking habits in the general population, to launch preventive campaigns and to study aversion therapy.