

AFFORDABILITY OF ALCOHO AND ALCOHOL DEPENDENCE PREVALENCE IN BELARUS

Y.E. Razvodovsky

Psychiatry, Grodno State Medical University, Grodno, Belarus

Introduction: Several studies evaluated the effects of changes in a price on various outcomes related to harmful alcohol consumption, including alcohol dependence, known to be specifically attributed to long-term alcohol abuse.

Objectives: Against this background, it would be interesting to evaluate the relationship between alcohol affordability and alcohol dependence prevalence rates in post-Soviet Belarus.

Methods: To examine the relation between alcohol affordability and alcohol dependence prevalence in Belarus between 1990 and 2010 regression analysis was performed using the statistical package "Statistica".

Results: In the period from 1990 to 2010 the prevalence of alcohol dependence in Belarus increased by 42,7% (from 1419,1 to 2024,4 per 10.000 of the population). The affordability of alcohol has increased significantly since the early 1990s: the average salary in 1993 could buy 7.3 litres of vodka compared with 73.9 litres in 2010. The results of time series analysis suggest positive association between alcohol affordability and alcohol dependence prevalence rates: a 0.3% increase in the prevalence of alcohol dependence rate following a 1% increase in affordability of alcohol.

Conclusions: The results from this study are consistent with previous findings suggesting a significant association between alcohol affordability and alcohol-related problems. The main reason for the growth of alcohol consumption and alcohol-related problems in Belarus was the liberalization of the alcohol policy and increase in the affordability of alcohol. Hence, to prevent a further increase of alcohol affordability, increasing alcohol prices seems to be one of the priority options of alcohol control policy in Belarus.