

Short Communication

Alcoholism in Adolescence. A Look to the Future

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INTRODUCTION

Alcohol consumption is currently a complex phenomenon, which has its consequences on the health of individuals and their environment, the use and abuse of this substance represents a health problem at the global, national and local level; its roots involve determining factors and cultural conditioning factors that complicate this problem [1].

Alcoholism is one of the leading causes of death worldwide and has a negative impact on all areas of activity of the individual [2]. Worldwide, more than a quarter (26.5%) of all young people aged 15-19 are drinkers, representing 155 million adolescents. Prevalence rates for alcohol use are highest among 15-19 year-olds in the WHO European Region (43.8%), followed by those in the Americas Region (38.2%) and In the Western Pacific Region (37.9%) [2,3], this consumption is higher in males than in females [3]. Each year 3.3 million deaths occur in the world due to the harmful use of alcohol, representing 5.9% of all deaths [4]. It is not enough to take a look at the past, it is necessary to look at this problem with a view to the future, currently there are conditions for its exacerbation.

Children as young as 9 years of age may be curious about alcohol consumption and may even try it. When a child begins drinking before the age of 15, they are much more likely to become a chronic drinker or a problem drinker. About 1 in 5 teens consider themselves problem drinkers. This means that they get drunk, have alcohol-related accidents, or get in trouble with the law, their families, friends, school, or dating partners [5]. Alcohol, although it is not considered illicit in most of the countries of the world, is a drug that affects both the individual and the family and society.

In this sense, the important physical, social and psychological risks, associated both with the early initiation of drinking, and with the abusive or intensive consumption of alcohol in adolescence, for example, dependency, alcohol-related violence, traffic accidents, risky sexual behaviors or learning difficulties, in addition to serving as a "gateway" to other drugs [6].

Adolescents who drink alcoholic beverages tend to "try and experiment" with the use of stimulant substances with the risk of initiating the use of other drugs [4]. "Illicit" drugs represent

a challenge for them, trying the prohibited becomes a goal, but once they try them, in the vast majority of cases, from a challenge it becomes a necessity that directs their life.

Adolescents use alcohol and other drugs for various reasons, including curiosity, and it is difficult to determine which of them will experiment and stop there, and which will develop serious problems [7]. In addition to being associated with a variety of negative physical, emotional, family, school, social problems, etc. [5,7] it is often associated with self-determination, fun, leisure and modernity and constitutes an element that gives status to its group of belonging, which makes its elimination more difficult despite the negative consequences derived from excessive consumption [7,8]. Due to the lack of inhibition produced by alcohol, at this stage of life the possibility of addiction is increased [4]. It is very difficult for adolescents to have a perception of the risk to which they are exposed; acting by instinct predominates more at this age than conscious handling of the situation.

In recent decades, in addition to the increase in alcohol consumption by minors, especially adolescents; the number of heavy drinkers in this population has also increased. During adolescence, changes occur in the endocrine and nervous systems that lead to significant transitions in the biological, cognitive, psychological and social development of the individual [8,9]. The adolescent is becoming an adult, but lacks the experience of these to face life.

In recent years, prevention and intervention measures and mechanisms have been developed against alcohol consumption among adolescents, involving health professionals, teachers, parents, as well as the media [8]. Although in many countries there are laws that prohibit the use of alcohol by minors, in many cases these are not fully complied with, encouraging consumption at these ages.

Despite some positive global trends since 2010 in the prevalence of episodes of binge drinking and in alcohol-related mortality and morbidity, there is no progress in decreasing total alcohol consumption per capita in the world, and the global burden of disease attributable to alcohol remains unacceptably high. Current trends and projections point to an increase in total per capita consumption worldwide in the next 10 years,

which will make it impossible to reach the target of a relative reduction of 10% by 2025, unless effective measures are applied. Alcohol control reverse the situation in countries with high and increasing levels of alcohol consumption [3].

Opportunities to reduce the harmful use of alcohol around the world include the inclusion of alcohol-related goals in major global policy and strategic frameworks, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, increased health awareness in the population, the decline in alcohol consumption among young people as observed in a wide range of countries, the recognition of the role of alcohol control policies in reducing health and gender inequalities, and increasing evidence for the efficacy and cost effectiveness of a number of alcohol control measures [3].

Only by uniting the forces of the different spheres can control of this situation be achieved. The government, family, society have to be immersed in the task, educational centers and primary health care have to create the necessary programs to raise the perception of risk in adolescents and demonstrate the negative effects to which they are exposed. The success is in preventing them from succumbing to the addiction, after it appears it is very difficult to eliminate it.

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