

Study finds alcohol is a growing problem for retirees

May 12 2010, By Mary Catt

(PhysOrg.com) -- For a decade, researchers followed more than 1,300 workers as they retire from work to identify how psychological, social and economic factors associated with retirement influence drinking behaviors.

The number of American adults ages 50 and older with substance abuse problems is expected to more than double by 2020 to 4.4 million, according to ILR School professor Samuel Bacharach, but "Our understanding of the psycho-social factors contributing to this problem remains limited."

For a decade, Cornell researchers led by Bacharach, the McKelvey-Grant Professor and director the ILR School's Institute for Workplace Studies and its R. Brinkley Smithers Institute for Alcohol-Related Workplace Studies, have followed more than 1,300 workers as they retire from work to identify how psychological, social and economic factors associated with retirement influence [drinking](#) behaviors. Participants who were within six months of becoming eligible for retirement were recruited from a variety of occupations and industries.

Findings to date suggest:

- Involuntary retirement is associated with more drinking, especially among those who reported greater preretirement job satisfaction.
- Voluntary retirement is associated with lower levels of [alcohol](#)

consumption and a lower risk of problematic drinking behavior.

However, this effect was weaker among those reporting higher levels of preretirement job satisfaction; in other words, those who liked their jobs more drank more heavily after they voluntarily retired.

- Retirement is associated with a lower rate of alcohol consumption. This effect is significantly stronger for those employed in work settings with permissive drinking norms and higher work stress.
- Among members of work settings with less permissive drinking norms and lower work stress, those who retired subsequently drank significantly more frequently than those who continued working.
- The frequency of binge drinking declines as individuals approach retirement but then continuously increases from the point of [retirement](#) on.

Although alcohol misuse affects up to 17 percent of adults ages 60 and older, it remains a largely unrecognized health problem, said Bacharach.

Recent research suggests that more than half of all hospital admissions for the elderly are attributable to alcohol-related problems, Bacharach added.

Project researchers are collecting their seventh wave of data on the original group that started in the study 10 years ago. According to Bacharach, the Smithers Institute dataset is "a national treasure." No other study tracks the emergence of alcohol problems among older adults as they age over time, he said.

Provided by Cornell University

Citation: Study finds alcohol is a growing problem for retirees (2010, May 12) retrieved 4 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2010-05-alcohol-problem-retirees.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.