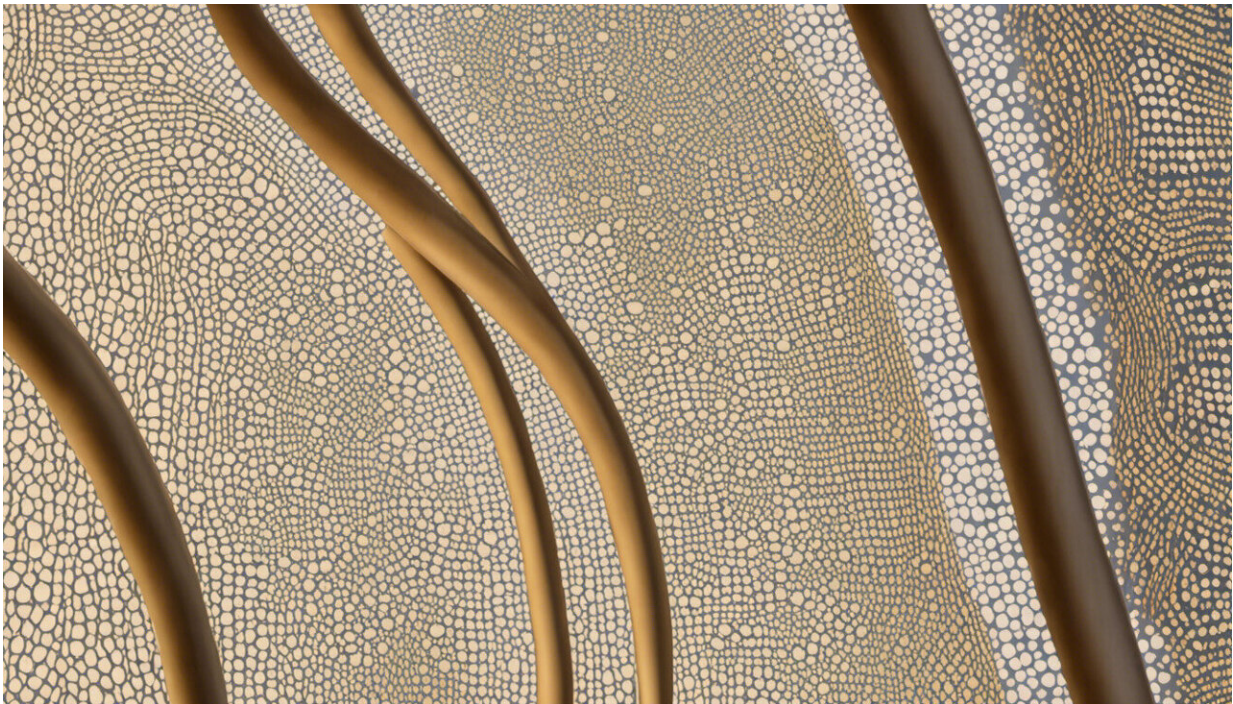


# Over the counter advice to benefit older drinkers

April 25 2016, by Carys Garland, Sciencenetwork Wa

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Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

Local GPs, pharmacists and other health professionals are being urged to discuss how much alcohol older people should drink, as they are more physiologically at-risk of the effects of drinking.

A WA-led study has found people aged between 65-74 are interested in

knowing more about the health risks and benefits of consuming [alcohol](#) from their doctor, but their knowledge on the topic is limited.

Older people are more likely to drink on a daily basis than any other age group, ECU addiction studies senior lecturer Celia Wilkinson says.

"Whilst we're seeing decreasing trends of alcohol use amongst younger age groups, the same is not necessarily the case for some older people," Dr Wilkinson says.

She says older people are in a unique situation because as they age they have undergone physiological changes making them more vulnerable to some effects of alcohol than younger people, even if they have drunk less.

ECU lecturer Julie Dare says these physiological changes, combined with the increased chance older people will be taking multiple medications, mean the risks associated with drinking at this age are potentially much higher.

The researchers say GPs and pharmacists are ideal people to educate elderly people about the risks and benefits associated with [drinking alcohol](#), as older people see them regularly for prescriptions.

"When a GP or any other medical practitioner is writing a new script for a particular condition, that represents a wonderful opportunity," Dr Wilkinson says.

"Particularly if either that condition or that medication has potentially got some correlation or negative contra-indication with alcohol."

About 30 per cent of men and 20 per cent of women that were interviewed could recall their GP raising the issue with them previously.

"About 50 per cent of them are receptive to their pharmacist raising the issue but about four per cent could recall their pharmacist doing so in the last 12 months," she says.

She says pharmacists sometimes refrain from having these conversations because they are worried broaching the topic will offend the [older person](#).

The research revealed the [older people](#) had some misconceptions about health benefits of alcohol.

With 68 per cent of men believing low to moderate consumption of red wine reduced [health risks](#), and 60 per cent of women believing the same.

The researchers are hoping to investigate communication issues between GPs and older clients in the future.

**More information:** Celia Wilkinson et al. Prescribing or dispensing medication represents the best opportunity for GPs and pharmacists to engage older people in alcohol-related clinical conversations, *International Journal of Pharmacy Practice* (2016). [DOI: 10.1111/ijpp.12255](#)

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