

Alcohol to claim 63,000 lives over next five years, experts warn

July 24 2017, by Amy Huxtable



Credit: University of Sheffield

Alcohol consumption will cause 63,000 deaths in England over the next five years – the equivalent of 35 deaths a day – according to a new report from the University of Sheffield Alcohol Research Group.

The report, published by the Foundation for Liver Research, found the majority of these deaths will be due to [alcoholic liver disease](#) (22,500) and cancer (32,500).

The modelling further estimates that between 2017 and 2022, the total cost to the NHS of [alcohol](#)-related illness and deaths will be £17 billion.

In its new report, Financial case for action on liver disease, endorsed by the independent Lancet Commission on Liver Disease, the Foundation for Liver Research urges the Government to implement a suite of policy measures designed to mitigate the rising health and financial burden of alcohol, including the introduction of minimum unit pricing (MUP), re-institution of alcohol duty escalator and advertising restrictions.

Providing evidence in support of Government intervention, new modelling shows that within five years of its introduction in England, a 50p MUP alone would result in:

- 1,150 fewer alcohol-related deaths
- 74,500 fewer alcohol-related hospital admissions
- Savings of £325.7m in healthcare costs
- Savings of £710.9m in crime costs

The total financial savings to the public purse of MUP is forecast to be £1.1 billion – the equivalent cost of the Government's recently announced investment package for Northern Ireland.

Colin Angus, Research Fellow at the University of Sheffield and part of the Sheffield Alcohol Research Group who conducted the research, said: "These new findings show there will be 35 deaths and 2,300 hospital admissions due to alcohol every day in England over the next five years.

"We estimate this will cost the NHS £17billion at a time when healthcare resources are already overstretched. Our research also shows that policies such as Minimum Unit Pricing have the potential to significantly reduce this burden."

Liver disease is now one of the most common causes of premature mortality in the UK with mortality rates having increased 400 per cent since 1970. In under-65s they have risen almost five-fold in this period.

Liver disease affects people of working age more than the other big killers, with an estimated 62,000 years of working life lost to liver disease every year. Liver disease disproportionally affects the poorest and the most vulnerable in society and is a major factor in generating socio-economic health inequalities.

Liver disease now presents one of the most pressing public health concerns of our time but the trend of worsening liver disease health outcomes could be reversed through concerted preventive action to tackle the main causes of [liver](#) disease: [alcohol misuse](#), obesity and viral hepatitis. Through the publication of its new report the Foundation for Liver Research makes the financial case for public health action in these areas and urges the implementation of targeted measures recommended by the independent Lancet Commission on Liver Disease.

Professor Roger Williams, Director of the Foundation for Liver Research and Chairman of the Lancet Commission on Liver Disease, said: "Liver [disease](#) is a public health crisis that has been steadily unfolding before our eyes for a number of years now and the Government will have to take robust public health action if its main causes (alcohol misuse, obesity and viral hepatitis) are to be controlled.

"Our new report strengthens the argument for intervention by revealing the full and alarming extent of the financial costs associated with inaction in these areas and setting out the economic benefits of addressing these risk factors."

He added: "Three years ago, the Lancet Commission on Liver Disease created a blueprint for improvement, supported by the clinical community, setting out a range of targeted measures to reduce the burden of ill [health](#) in these areas.

"Yet we are still missing prioritisation, funding and drive to implement

the Commission's recommendations. We urge the Government to take immediate steps to halt and reverse the crisis in [liver disease](#)."

Provided by University of Sheffield

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