The frequency of smoking and problem drinking among general hospital inpatients in Brazil - using the AUDIT and Fagerstrom questionnaires.

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CONTEXT: Although the CAGE questionnaire is one of the most widely used screening instruments, it has been criticized for not identifying people who are drinking heavily or who have alcohol-related problems but do not yet show symptoms of alcohol dependence. The AUDIT (Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test) questionnaire was developed by WHO as a screening instrument specifically designed to identify problem drinkers, as well as those who were already dependent on alcohol. OBJECTIVE: The aim of this study was to use the AUDIT and Fagerstrom questionnaires in a general hospital inpatient population to measure the frequency of problem drinking and nicotine dependence, and to see if levels varied between medical specialties. DESIGN: Retrospective cross-sectional study. SETTING: Federal funded public teaching hospital. SAMPLE: 275 inpatients from both general medicine and surgery wards. MAIN MEASUREMENTS: Socio-demographic data, AUDIT (Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test) and Fagerstrom Test for Nicotine Dependence. RESULTS: We interviewed 275 inpatients, 49% of whom were men and women. Thirty-five percent of participants were identified as "cases" by the AUDIT questionnaire, 22% of the male patients and 33% of the female patients. Just over half of inpatients were current smokers. The gastroenterology (26%) and general medicine (16%) inpatient units had the largest number of individual cases. CONCLUSIONS: Only by knowing the prevalence of alcohol abuse/dependence and nicotine dependence in a general hospital can we evaluate the need for a specialized liaison service to identify and treat the patients.

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