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Help | FAQ
Tutorial
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MeSH Browser
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Batch Citation Matcher
Clinical Queries
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Order Documents
NLM Gateway
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The frequency of smoking and problem drinking among general hospital inpatients in Brazil - using the AUDIT and Fagerstrom questionnaires.

Figlie NB, Pillon SC, Dunn J, Laranjeira R.

Alcohol and Drug Research Unit, Escola Paulista de Medicina, Universidade Federal de Sao Paulo, Sao Paulo, Brazil.

CONTEXT: Although the CAGE questionnaire is one of the most widely alcohol 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 objective 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 speciality. DESIGN: Retrospective cross-sectional study. SETTING: Fed funded public teaching hospital. SAMPLE: 275 inpatients from both general medicine and surgery. MAIN MEASUREMENTS: Socio-demographic data, AUDIT (Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test) and Fagerstrom Test for Nicotine Dependence. RESULTS: We interviewed 275 inpatients, 49% of whom were men and 51% were women. Thirty-four patients were identified as "cases" by the Audit questionnaire; 22% of the male patients and 3% of the females. Just over 20% 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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