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Alcohol as a social threat among grammar-school adolescents

Nowadays it is more and more common for children and young people to take to drinking alcohol and because of this, the risk of addiction to this stimulant is increasing in this social group (3,6). According to many authors, the increase in spreading of alcohol drinking among adolescents is caused by many factors, which are related to economic, social and habit changes in our country. Among these factors the most frequent are: an increase in availability of alcohol, aggressive commercials directed at young people and not observing the rules of the sale of alcohol (8).

At present there is an increase in the number of neglected children, and it is considered that the reason for this state of affairs is, that parents are absorbed in their careers and making money instead of their children's problems (4).

The aim of this study was to specify the dimension of alcohol drinking among grammar-school adolescents and the influence of the family on the development of addiction.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Altogether, the study included 100 people (30 girls and 70 boys). Participants in this study were students of the third class in a grammar school. The study was conducted in the city of Biała Podlaska on the basis of the author's own survey questionnaire. The survey questionnaire was anonymous and voluntary.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

84 students from the studied group of grammar school adolescents have already had their first contact with alcohol and 16 students have not. The majority of students tried alcohol before they finished 14, but in a larger percentage (78) it was boys that took to drinking alcohol than girls (56%). More and more often the border between sex and the age of taking to drinking alcohol becomes obliterated. All-national sociological studies prove that young people, especially young women, more and more often and with greater intensity take to alcohol drinking (1) (Table 1).

Table 1. The age of starting alcohol drinking. Characterisation according to sex

Age of students	Sex			
	girls		boys	
	n	%	n	%
9-14	14	56	46	78
>14	11	44	13	22
Total	25	100	59	100

As a result of the conducted studies it occurred that 83% of students were being brought up in families and living with both parents. This phenomenon is confirmed by the research of other authors (7). To determine the cause of taking to alcohol drinking by young people, they were asked in what circumstances they drink alcohol most often. It turned out that they do it for social reasons – 73.8%, in stressful situations, i.e. when they experience the feeling of uncertainty and insecurity – 21.4%, during conflicts with their parents – 3.6% and because they like it – 1.2%. An important factor that has an influence on this type of behaviour of young people is family. Lack of fulfilment of certain functions of the family causes a situation, when young people having no support in the family, no examples to follow or suitable conditions for emotional development, look for solutions, for example in alcohol (9).

The largest percentage of the studied grammar school adolescents (44%), had opportunities of drinking alcohol on holiday and in occasional situations. 28.6% of students claimed that they drink alcohol once or twice a week, 19% – that it happens once a month and for 8.4% of students – once a quarter. Because of taking part in the life of people of the same age or looking for new sensations, adolescents are very susceptible to encouragement to try alcohol (5).

As much as 69% of the adolescents claimed that they were drinking alcohol in the presence of their parents. This is a consequence of the fact that adults more and more often show a liberal attitude towards drinking alcohol by young people (7)

When asked if they are familiar with the consequences of taking to drinking in such young age, 82.1% of the students were not able to answer this question, 13.1% answered that only frequent drinking may lead to addiction, and 4.8% said that the consequences were diseases of liver. It would be desirable to widespread as much as possible among not only adolescents but among their parents and guardians, what are the reasons, symptoms and consequences of drinking alcohol at such young age (5).

It turned out that the most preferable alcohol was beer (69%) and wine (29%) and only with 2% of the studied this was strong alcohol. Means for this sort of drinks come from pocket money from their parents. This phenomenon is perceived as a result of educational negligence of parents, who very often try to compensate for their absence in a different way, for example by raising the pocket money (10).

16% of the young people had a contact with a person addicted to alcohol in their family, and most often because with 11% it was the father, with 1% – both parents and with 4% – some other person (brother, sister or grandparents). It is generally known that the presence of alcohol in the environment of a young man may be a factor conducive to the development of addiction (2).

Analysis of the results proved that in the opinion of adolescents alcohol is a means infusing them with courage and making it easier to get acquainted with new people (48.8%). It acts as a tranquillizer (26.2%), and helps to accept difficult situations more quickly (25%). Such situations often prove the fact that adolescents became addicted to alcohol at a very young age (10).

CONCLUSIONS

1. The majority of young people, independently of age, had their first contact with alcohol before the age of 14.
2. Over 80% of students were not familiar with negative consequences of drinking alcohol at such young age.
3. The family did not provide children with pro-health patterns of behaviour and did not try to prevent the development of addiction with so young people.

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SUMMARY

The aim of the study was to determine the dimension of alcohol drinking with grammar-school adolescents and the influence of the family upon development of alcohol addiction with young people. The study showed that grammar school adolescents had their first contact with alcohol already between 9 and 14. Young people did not know the consequences of alcohol drinking at so young age. Although the majority of students came from complete families, the family did not try to provide them with pro-health patterns of behaviour, and at the same time, it did not try to prevent the development of addiction with younger and younger children.

Alkohol jako zagrożenie społeczne wśród młodzieży gimnazjalnej

Celem badań było ustalenie rozmiarów picia alkoholu przez gimnazjalistów oraz wpływu rodziny na powstawanie uzależnienia od alkoholu przez ludzi młodych. Badania wykazały, że gimnazjaliści swój pierwszy kontakt z alkoholem mieli już między 9 a 14 rokiem życia. Ludzie młodzi nie znali konsekwencji, jakie może nieść picie alkoholu w tak młodym wieku. Pomimo że w większości była to młodzież pochodząca z rodziny pełnej, to i tak rodzina nie starała się dostarczać prozdrowotnych wzorców zachowań, a tym samym nie starała się zapobiegać powstawaniu uzależnienia u coraz to młodszych dzieci.