



Featured Web Resources

Searching for a reliable website to refer your patients to? MedlinePlus is the National Institutes of Health's Website for patients and their families. Produced by the National Library of Medicine, it provides information about diseases, conditions, and wellness issues in language that is easy to understand. MedlinePlus offers reliable, up-to-date health information, anytime, anywhere, free of charge. Patients can and will find information online - it is a health care providers responsibility to help them find information that is accurate and evidence-based.

Link: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/>

In The Know: Screening and brief interventions for alcohol misuse by pharmacists

Hazardous or harmful drinking behaviours are prevalent in our society, with some estimates as high as a third to a half of those who seek services at pharmacies. Harmful drinking is best described as drinking that leads to mental or physical health problems whereas hazardous drinking includes consuming alcohol in quantities that would be more than a recommended upper limit.

In recent years, researchers from the UK, Australia, and New Zealand have been exploring the pharmacist's role in screening for and providing brief interventions for alcohol misuse. Brief interventions in primary care populations have been shown to be effective in reducing alcohol consumption. Evidence shows that it is feasible for pharmacists to screen for alcohol use problems in community pharmacy settings. Many people are receptive to screening and assessment for potentially problematic alcohol use. This discussion can lead to advice on reducing alcohol use and can address issues related to alcohol and medications. There are a variety of useful tools and resources to support pharmacists in this and their patients. To assure an open and forthcoming exchange of information these discussions need to occur in private.

Why does alcohol consumption matter to pharmacists?

The adverse effects of alcohol misuse and dependence on individuals, families, and society are well known to pharmacists. Research shows that many people do not understand the impact of alcohol on their health including how it impacts their medications and their medication taking behaviour. An important part of the pharmacist's role includes evaluating alcohol-medication interactions, alcohol's impact on physical and mental illnesses, and impact on overall health. Also to be addressed is the impact of alcohol use on medication-taking behaviour.

Tools & resources

Useful tools and references are available for those wishing to provide screening or brief interventions

and a few of these are listed here but our collection is not exhaustive:

- The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) has low-risk alcohol use [guidelines](#) that can be found at the link below, which also provides information on the volumes of alcohol in various drinks (e.g., beer, wine, and distilled alcohol).
- The BC medical association also has a problem drinking [brief intervention guideline](#) with practical information that can be found here:
- The WHO has a document called [Brief Interventions for Hazardous and Harmful Drinking: A Manual for Use in Primary Care](#).
- AUDIT or "[The Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test: Guidelines for Use in Primary Care](#)" is a companion manual that contains an interview and self-report version of the AUDIT tool that could be used in pharmacies.

The [Australian government](#) has excellent resources on alcohol.

Other useful references:

Canadian Public Health Association <http://www.cpha.ca/en/portals/substance/article01.aspx>
<http://www.alcoholconcern.org.uk>

Dhital et al. The impact of training and delivering alcohol brief intervention on the knowledge and attitudes of community pharmacists: a before and after study. *Drug Alcohol Rev.* 2013;32(2):147-156.

Dhital et al. Community pharmacy service users' views and perceptions of alcohol screening and brief intervention. *Drug Alcohol Rev.* 2010;29(6):596-602.

Horsfield et al. What do community pharmacists think about undertaking screening and brief interventions with problem drinkers? Results of a qualitative study in New Zealand and England. *Int J Pharm Practice* 2011;19(3):192-200.

Hyman Z. Brief interventions for high-risk drinkers. *J Clin Nurs.* 2006;15(11):1383-1396.

Watson MB, Alison. The feasibility of providing community pharmacy-based services for alcohol misuse: a literature review. *Int J Pharm Practice* 2009;17(4):199-205.

Zanjani et al. Alcohol and prescription drug safety in older adults. *Drug, healthcare and patient safety.* 2013;5:13-27.

In The News: “National study links adolescent marijuana use with higher risk of psychosis”

A four-year national study that revealed that smoking marijuana, particularly heavy use in early adolescence, increases the risk of psychosis by as much as 40 percent.

Link: <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/local/National-study-links-adolescent-marijuana-use-with-higher-risk-of-psychosis-223198541.html>

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