Predictors of Binge Drinking in Elderly Americans
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BACKGROUND

The increasing trend in elderly binge drinking in the U.S. is cause for alarm. Alcohol consumption in seniors can be associated with cognitive decline and worsening of comorbidities, including hypertension, stroke, and osteoporosis. We sought to describe the demographic and clinical characteristics of elderly Americans reporting binge drinking and determine the independent predictors of binge drinking in this population.

METHODS

The 2008 Centers for Disease Control’s Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey was utilized to identify a cohort of 4,815 individuals in the U.S. of age 65 or older. Demographic data and clinical history were recorded in these patients. The primary outcome of interest was self-reported binge drinking, defined as an affirmative response to the question: “How many times in the past 30 days have you had more than 5 drinks (in men) or more than 4 drinks (in women) on an occasion?”

RESULTS

Among 4,815 elderly patients studied, a total of 466 (9.7%) patients reported binge drinking while 4,349 (90.3%) patients reported no history of binge drinking. Elderly patients reporting binge drinking were younger and were more often male, of Hispanic ethnicity, and with veteran status. They were less likely to be college educated and more likely to be employed with lower salaries. While no difference in health insurance was noted between the two groups, binge drinkers reported more financial barriers to medical care with lower rates of medical checkup within the past two years. Elderly patients reporting binge drinking had higher rates of smoking, higher rates of obesity and overweight body mass index, lower rates of coronary artery disease, and no difference in rates of diabetes mellitus, prior stroke, and prior myocardial infarction. Binge drinking was not associated with anxiety or depressive disorders in this population.

Multivariate Analysis of Predictors of Binge Drinking in Elderly Americans

In multivariate analysis, independent predictors of binge drinking in elderly patients included age, male gender, smoking, college education, annual income < $25,000, and coronary artery disease.

CONCLUSIONS

Older age, male gender, smoking, lack of college education, lower income, and absence of coronary artery disease are independently associated with higher rates of binge drinking among elderly adults in the United States.