

Primary care physician's own AUDIT-score as a predictor for their use of brief alcohol intervention

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Background To define whether the AUDIT-scores of primary health care (PHC) physicians predict their willingness to use brief alcohol intervention (BI).

Methods Cross-sectional self-administered questionnaire survey to all 3193 physicians providing PHC in Finland. The response rate was 1909 (59.8%). Odds ratios (OR) from multinomial regression analysis were calculated for self-reported frequency (never, occasionally or regularly) of conducting BIs by physicians with AUDIT-scores of ≤ 7 or ≥ 8 .

Results The prevalence of heavy drinkers based on AUDIT-score (≥ 8) was 14.5% among all physicians, 7.0% among females and 27.0% among males. Of the respondents 9.4% reported doing BI regularly and 50.0% occasionally. AUDIT-scores did not predict either regular or occasional use of BI (Table). Instead, several other independent predictors for higher use of BI were found. These included having a specialist license in general practice or occupational health care, years of experience as PHC physicians and the location of the practice, but not gender or age (Table). The OR for regular activity among the physicians with AUDIT-score ≥ 11 was 0.36 (95% CI 0.14-0.94), but this subgroup was too small to draw definite conclusion.

Conclusions The study indicates that heavy drinking by PHC physicians does not explain the general low frequency with which BI is used.

Table. Adjusted odds ratios (OR) for PHC physicians providing brief interventions regularly and occasionally. Reference category was physicians with no activity (n=776). OR was adjusted for all other variables.

	Regular activity (n=179) OR (95% CI)	Occasional activity (n=954) OR (95% CI)
Gender		
Female	1.00	1.00
Male	0.77 (0.53-1.13)	1.24 (1.00-1.54)
Age, yrs		
≤ 30	1.00	1.00
31-40	2.46 (0.93-6.49)	1.49 (0.94-2.38)
41-50	2.23 (0.73-6.80)	1.24 (0.71-2.16)
≥ 51	2.38 (0.71-7.98)	1.13 (0.60-2.13)
Province of practice		
Northern Finland	1.00	1.00
Eastern Finland	1.07 (0.53-2.15)	1.60 (1.09-2.35)
Western Finland	1.23 (0.71-2.14)	1.37 (1.00-1.88)
Southern Finland	1.69 (0.97-2.94)	1.72 (1.25-2.37)
Practice location		
Countryside	1.00	1.00
Cities without medical faculty	0.87 (0.56-1.36)	1.04 (0.81-1.34)
Cities with medical faculty	1.44 (0.92-2.26)	1.35 (1.03-1.76)
Experience as a physician, yrs		
≤ 5	1.00	1.00
6-10	0.93 (0.38-2.24)	0.87 (0.54-1.41)
11-20	0.74 (0.27-2.03)	0.76 (0.44-1.33)
≥ 21	1.45 (0.48-4.43)	1.01 (0.54-1.89)
Experience as a PHC physician, yrs		
≤ 5	1.00	1.00
6-10	1.25 (0.63-2.48)	1.23 (0.82-1.82)
≥ 11	1.24 (0.56-2.78)	1.66 (1.04-2.66)
Specialist licence in general practice or occupational health care		
No	1.00	1.00
Yes	1.95 (1.33-2.86)	1.42 (1.13-1.79)
AUDIT-score		
0-7	1.00	1.00
≥ 8	0.76 (0.44-1.29)	0.86 (0.64-1.14)