
World Approaches To Address The Harmful Impact Of Alcohol

Alcoholism is a very expensive disorder. Economically, it can cost a country's national government millions to billions of dollars. For instance in the US, it cost the country \$249 billion in 2010 alone (NIAAA, 2020), while in the Philippines, an estimated amount of PHP 200 billion was spent by the government mainly in the treatment of the citizens with the disorder (Movendi International, 2019). It is also one of the most significant causes of death among adolescence and young adults worldwide. According to WHO 2020, it accounts for over 320 000 deaths in this age group, and in line with these jaw-dropping facts, emphasis on control and reduction of alcohol consumption globally is continuously strengthen in all nations.

Most of the strategies utilized worldwide are patterned from the World Health Organization's Guides to reduce harmful consumption of alcohol. Recommended actions such as raising public awareness on the harm of binge drinking, limiting accessibility of the product through excise taxation and institution of punishment for alcohol-related legislation violation are adapted in several states in the world.

In Sweden, an interesting strategy to discourage youth from patronizing Alcohol was initiated by a group of researcher. A technique that utilizes competition was instituted to motivate students to abstain from alcohol. Rewards in a lottery are provided to a winning individual or group. Similarly, a program called "Triad" also showed significant impact in Swedish youths' used of Alcohol. It has three phases: first starts at Grade 4 where students are taught about traffic-related topics; second commences at Grade 5 where students' morality and ethics are harnessed; finally at Grade 6, they are presented with information to discourage attempts to consume Alcoholic products. This strategy did not show a huge impact in the rate of alcohol consumption among adolescence (Beckman, 2017), but what the world can learn from this is that programs targeting alcoholism should began early in life. It may not ensure a significant reduction in the number of people engaging in binge drinking or alcoholic behaviour but it can save a few numbers from it.

In Australia, an approach that focuses on four (4) priorities to counter alcoholism in the country is instituted. Priority 1 concentrates on enhancing safety and accessibility of facilities that respond to emergencies. Excessive alcohol consumption is known to be associated with violence, crimes and debilitating injuries and the strategy focused on making emergency and ambulance services, and police units available round the clock to maintain the safety of the general population and minimize the impact of injuries sustained due to harmful alcohol use. In addition, the enhanced availability of rehabilitation centers allows individuals to seek help and treatment for substance abuse. The second priority targets the price and advertisements of alcoholic products. The placement of higher taxation to alcoholic beverages leads to increase prices and alcohol consumption. In addition, the taxes collected from these products are contributed to programs that aim to reduce its consumption. Similarly, advertisements of alcohol in the country were placed under strict regulations, however, the existence of worldwide web and the social media has proven to challenge this strategy. Monitoring of ads published in several sites is difficult, thus, minimizing youth's exposure to alcohol-related advertisement challenges the system. The third priority focuses on making treatment opportunities more

available to alcoholism-afflicted individuals. The proponents of this initiatives believed that treatment is vital in avoiding the adverse effects of alcoholism, and increasing its accessibility to all will prevent further harm to the individual and the community in general. Finally, the fourth priority focuses on creating a healthier environment through promotion of alcohol risk literacy among Australians. The public is educated about the risks of harmful alcohol consumption through raising awareness programs. Australia's strategies are sophisticated. It covers prevention of harm related to excessive alcohol consumption, the importance of treatment and raising public awareness of the danger of this risky behaviour. However, the danger of advertisements was not adequately address in it. For instance, alcohol use is still portrayed as a habit of the affluent in TV and a way to look cool among peers that can possibly undermine all the efforts placed in reducing this NCD.

Another approach to addressing the harm of alcohol is depicted in the establishment of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAA) in 1970. The organization has paved the way to the development of policies and guidelines that address the harms posed by alcohol consumption. One of its greatest achievement is the development of the drug Naltrexone (Disulfiram) which aids in preventing withdrawal symptoms among alcoholic individuals. It was also able to significantly raised awareness through the production of an Emmy-winning movie called "Addiction" that exhibited the harm and consequences of alcoholism to a person and community. Several books (e.g. Helping Patients Who Drink Too Much: A Clinician's Guide, Alcohol Screening and Brief Intervention for Youth: A Practitioner's Guide) were also published under its initiatives, which created a guideline for clinicians to perform screening and risk assessment of persons tendency for an alcoholic behaviour. The strategies promulgated by the NIAAA helps the United States and the world to better implement strategies for early detection of situations that can lead to alcoholism. It also helps the people to be better informed of the risk associated with this behaviour.

Another method instituted to counter alcohol use is the implementation of punishments for drunk-driving. While zero tolerance is observed in certain European countries, some nations like the UK tolerate a blood alcohol level of 0.8. A varied intensity of punishment is also noticeable, ranging from monetary fines to suspension of driving license, and all these efforts target the reduction of driving under influence of alcohol across nations.

In the Philippines, alcoholism in over 50% of Filipinos aged 20 to late 50s plus 36% underage drinkers is outlined by the Department of Health in their 2020 report. This behaviour was also associated to over 10 000 accident-related deaths from 2016-2018. These facts have lead the legislators to develop the House Bill Number 1026 which insist the importance of increasing the taxes of alcohol products, and add a 7% annual increments. This initiative is geared towards regulating consumption, especially among the young and reducing debilitating injuries related to it that not only financially burden a person but the health system as well.

In summary, a variety of approaches in implemented in different parts of the world to address the harmful impact of alcohol use. Although some novelty such as the promotion of "competition" among Swedish students is instituted, most of the strategies outlined in literatures are almost similar and is patterned to the WHO's strategies to control NCDs.