

Study of alcoholism in elderly - The etiology and effects on health

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I. Introduction

- Alcoholism is common but unrecognized problem in elderly people.
- The effects of alcohol in elderly people compared to young are combined effects of alcoholism and age related comorbid conditions.
- Problems related to alcohol use in elderly people have interrelated medical, behavioural, social and environmental factors.
- Advancement of health care facilities, awareness about them and education have improved life expectancy leading to increase in proportion of elderly people. Ageing leads to progressive, gradual loss of function of various organs and increased incidence of diseases.

II. Aims and objectives

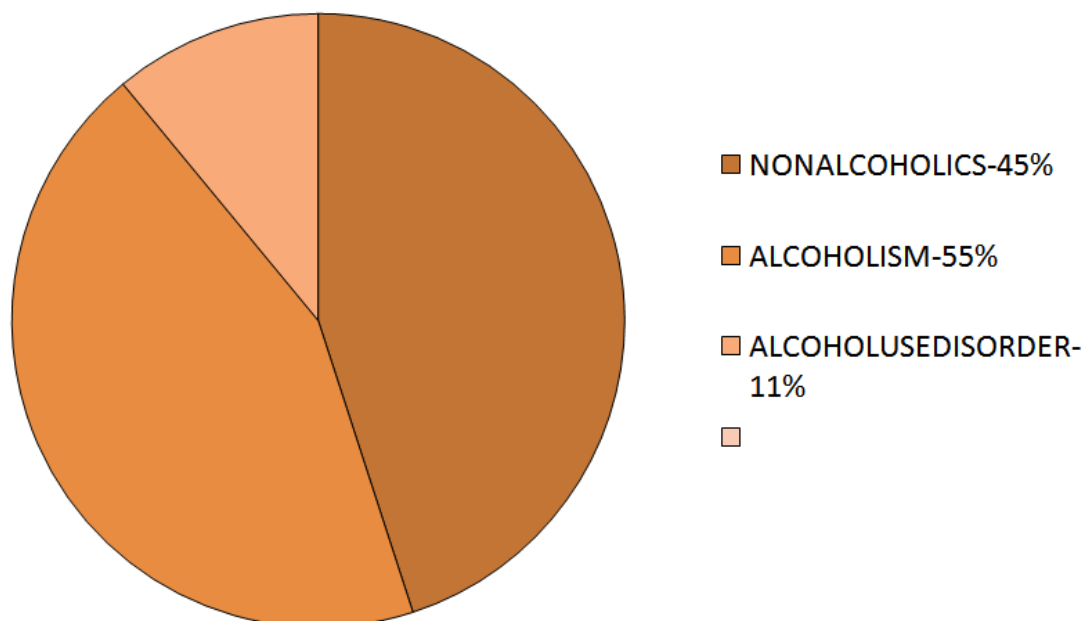
1. To study prevalence of alcoholism and alcohol use disorder in elderly.
2. To study etiological factors and effects of alcohol on behaviour and health.

III. Methods and Methodology:

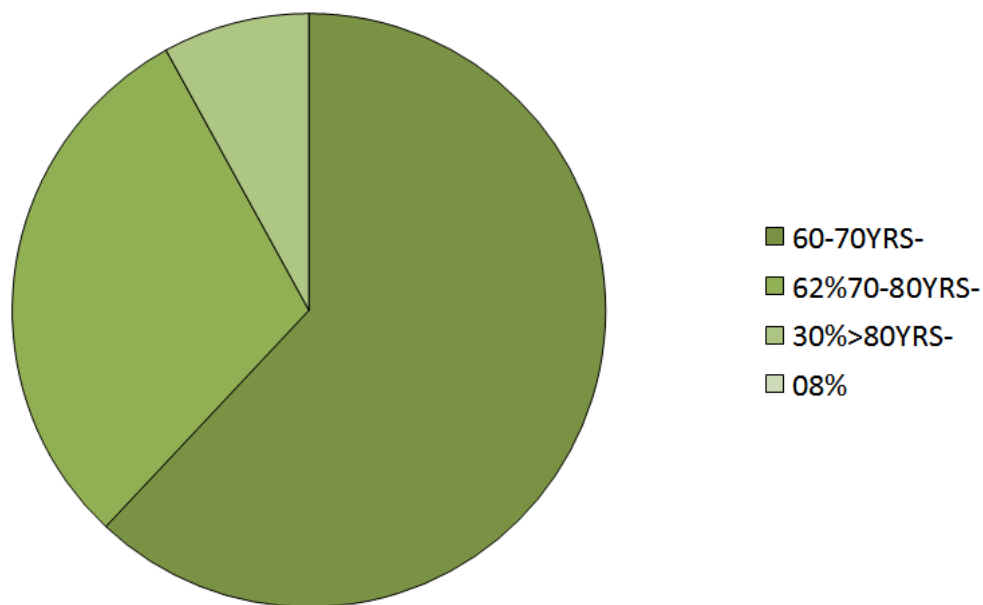
- Hospital based analytical study of 100 elderly patients admitted in medical wards in tertiary care hospital, Tirupati
- Patients with age more than 60 yrs are included.
- CAGE criteria and DSM-V are used to detect alcoholism and alcohol use disorder

IV. Results

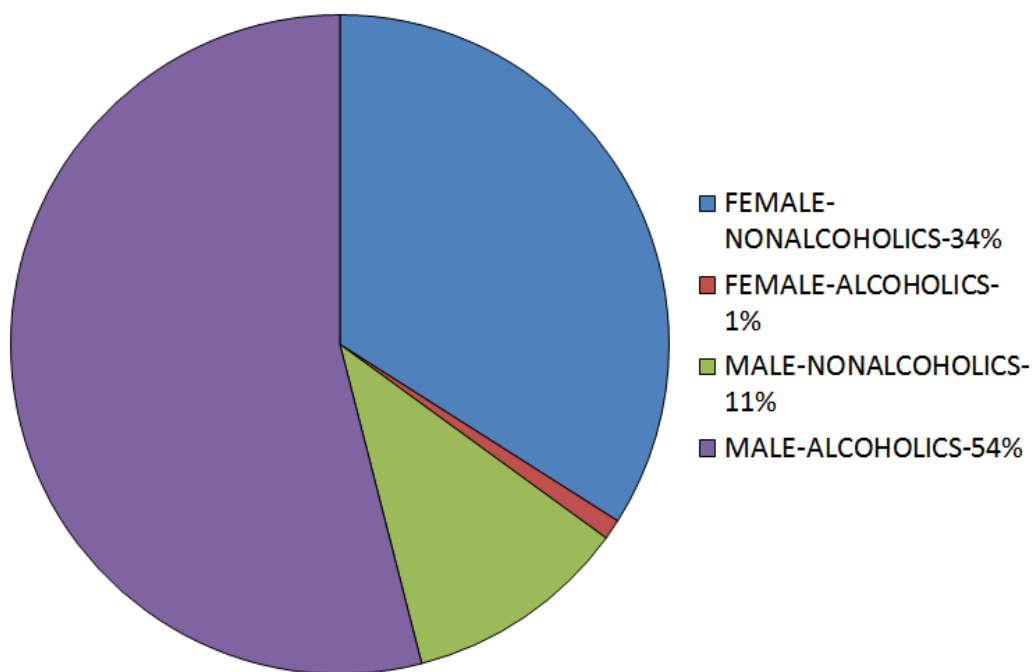
Alcoholism and alcohol use disorder



AGEDISTRIBUTION



SEXDISTRIBUTION



ETIOLOGY

EARLYONSET39(70.9%)		LATEONSET16(29.09%)	
HIGHLEVELSOFSTRESS	17(30.9%)	DEPRESSIONDUETOLONELINESSANDHEALTHPROBLEMS	9(16.63%)
PEERPLEASUREANDEASYAVAILABILITY	13(23.63%)	DIFFICULTYINMIXINGINSOCIETYANDMAKINGNEWFRIENDS	4(7.27%)
STRUGGLINGINTERPERSONALRELATIONSHIP	9(16.63%)	RETIREMENT	3(5.45%)

EFFECTS ON HEALTH

SYSTEM INVOLVED	PERCENTAGE
CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM	14(25%)
FEVER AND SEPSIS	10(18.18%)
CARDIOVASCULAR SYSTEM	6(10.8%)
LIVER AND GI SYSTEM	5(9.09% EACH)
H/O FALL, RESPIRATORY SYSTEM	4(7.27% EACH)
RENAL SYSTEM	4(7.27%)
HYPERTENSION AND DIABETES MELLITIS	3(5.4%)

V. Discussion

- In the study, alcoholism was seen in 55% and alcohol use disorder was seen in 11%.
 - Alcoholism is more in males compared to females.
 - Early onset of alcoholism is seen in 70.9% and late onset of alcoholism is in 29.09%.
 - Causes for early onset of alcoholism are high levels of stress (30.9%), for peer pleasure and easy availability (23.63%), struggling interpersonal relationship (16.36%).
 - Causes for late onset of alcoholism are depression due to loneliness or health problems (16.36%), difficulty due to difficulty in mixing in community (7.27%), retirement (5.45%).
- Effects on health due to alcoholism are mainly
- on central nervous system - dementia, depression, cognitive dysfunction, peripheral neuropathy, cerebellar damage, CVA (25%),
 - fever and sepsis (28.18%) due to malnourishment, nutritional deficiency, immunosuppression,
 - Coronary artery disease (10.8%)
 - Alcoholic liver disease and GI bleeding (9.09%)
 - CKD, H/O falls, respiratory disease (7.27% each) • Hypertension and diabetes mellitus (5.4%)

VI. Limitations

- CAGE criteria is insensitive for detecting binge drinking, frequency, pattern and amount of alcohol consumed.
- Modified diagnostic criteria should be developed for elderly people including different aspects of health due to comorbidities, depressive illness and deemphasizing social, legal, occupational aspects and more emphasis on medical, behaviour, social factors.

VII. Conclusions

- The study shows, alcoholism is more prevalent in elderly people with effects on health mainly involving CNS, CVS, GI systems with high levels of stress being a major cause followed by consuming for peer pleasure and easy availability.
- As elderly population is increasing there is a need to study effects of alcoholism in elderly and to develop better screening criteria involving comorbid conditions and pattern of consumption.
- The continued regular or irregular intake of alcohol with the ageing process with gradual deterioration of organs system ultimately results in this entity presumably known as alcoholism in elderly people.
- In my observation of one and a half years as a resident, symptom complex in alcoholism and elderly people are more or less the same, however in alcoholics it appears early and they never (or with great difficulty) reach elderly age group.

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