

# Is our love affair with alcohol causing more pleasure or pain?

RCPI

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# Outline

- Introduction
- Alcohol Action Ireland-who are we?
- WHO EU Charter on Alcohol
- Alcohol,environment,individual
- Impact on others
- Barriers to change
- AAI vision for the future

# Alcohol Action Ireland - Independent Voice on Alcohol

- Advocates for those experiencing harm from alcohol-related problems and their families
- Provides public information on policy measures to reduce harm
- Efforts to build capacity to reduce such harm
- Advocates for such policies with Government
- Monitoring beverage alcohol industry behaviour
- Offers analyses of alcohol-related harm in Ireland
- No vested interests

# Alcohol Action Ireland

Board;

Chairperson; Norah Gibbons, Director of Advocacy for Barnardos

- Irish Cancer Society
- Association of Health Promotion
- Irish Medical Organisation
- Irish Association of Alcohol & Addiction Counsellors
- Pioneers
- National Policy Officer on Mental Health
- Royal College of Physicians
- Community Groups
- Individuals

# EU/WHO Charter on Alcohol 1995

1. All people have the right to a family, community and working life protected from accidents, violence and other negative consequences of alcohol consumption
2. All people have the right to valid, impartial information and education, starting early in life, on the consequences of alcohol consumption on health, the family and society
3. All children have the right to grow up in an environment protected from the negative consequences of alcohol consumption and to the extent possible from the promotion of alcoholic beverages.
4. All people with hazardous or harmful alcohol consumption and members of their families have the right to accessible treatment and care.
5. All people who do not wish to use alcohol or who cannot do so for health or other reasons, have the right to be safeguarded from pressures to drink and be supported in their non-drinking behaviour.

## Alcohol Action Ireland

### Survey of National Attitudes to Alcohol 2006

- 82% of people believe that our current alcohol consumption levels are a problem
- 66% know someone with a problem
- 57% have been concerned about someone's use of alcohol
- 44% have been injured harassed or intimidated by someone else's drinking

# Public Health Model



# Alcohol

- Psychoactive drug which changes way we feel in a dose dependent manner
- Alcohol impacts on thinking and behaviour
- Dependence inducing

# Environment/Culture

- Easy availability
- Easy accessibility
- Selling alcohol to young people
- Price
- Strong alcohol content
- Marketing of alcohol
- Tolerance for drunkenness
- "Buzz" = "craic"
- Birth to death

# Individual

- Early age
- Group activity
- Relief drinking
- Vulnerability to marketing
- Family history
- Relationship difficulties
- Gradual erosion of self esteem
- Difficulty in managing emotions
- Inability to know how to manage stress
- Multiple harms
- No intervention

# Drinking Journey + Impact

Drinker

Accidents  
Injuries  
Suicide

Guilt  
Shame  
defensive

Multiple  
harms to  
whole  
person

Low risk drinking



Hazardous  
drinking



Harmful  
drinking



Dependency

Partner

Brief  
Intervention

Specialist  
Treatment

Normal  
interaction

Confusion  
Discomfort  
Self doubt

Distress  
Communication  
Distance  
Injury

Powerless  
Helpless  
Exhausted

# Barriers to change

- Alcohol Industry Influence
- Lack of National Alcohol Surveillance office
- Little understanding of levels of serious problems- acute+chronic on health and well being
- Few policies to reduce harm
- Continual positive reinforcement of alcohol
- No political will
- Ambivalent attitudes
- Personal drinking

# Alcohol Action Ireland- vision

- Leaders openly acknowledge problem
- National Alcohol Strategy
- Local community action on alcohol
- Provision of a continuum of treatment options
- Society protecting children from harm
- Well supported + resourced NGO

# Vision.....

- Ireland - moderate use with tolerance for harm ↓
- Reduction in the various indices of harm
- Sense of self respect around alcohol
- Awareness of losses
- Full awareness of Alcohol Industry influence and take control
- Social and health needs take precedence over commercial interests
- All health and social care organisations ↓ harm  
= Building Capacity

# What can you do?

- Write to Minister for Health on all alcohol issues
- Write to newspapers
- Become “alcohol aware” through public health information
- Be active in action
- Influence local organisations around alcohol
- Be aware of your own attitudes and behaviours around alcohol
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