

IMPACT OF ALCOHOL USAGE IN A RURAL COMMUNITY.

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The aim of the study was to find out the extent of alcohol usage in a community and study some of its effects. The study was conducted in the Kadugannawa Divisional Director of Health Services (DDHS) area from November 2000 to March 2001.

This DDHS area serves a population of approximately 100000. The study population comprised 600 households, selected randomly. The study instrument was a questionnaire, which was administered through the public health midwife of the respective area.

Of the 806 males, over 18 years, 283 (35.1%) were using alcohol in varying quantities. They came from 283 different households. (52.8%). There were no alcohol users in 255 (47.2%) of the households.

Family disputes were experienced in 18 of the 283 households with person/s consuming alcohol. Among the 255 non- alcohol-consuming households, it was only 7. (P- 0.038). There was no significant difference with regards to disputes with neighbors, recreational activities and family savings.

The alcohol group was found to be more in debt when compared to the non-alcohol group (P-0.011). Presence of chronic illnesses between the two groups was not significantly different

Class teacher evaluation of the school children's educational performance and mental status was significantly lower in the alcohol-consuming group compared to the non-alcohol group. However, there was no significant difference with respect to school attendance and behavior.

This study has indicated that alcohol usage contributes to family disputes and financial problems within the family. This also had deleterious effects on children's educational performance and mental status.