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**Socio-economic determinants of alcohol-related problems**

**Summary**

Among major costs of the political and economic transformation in Poland there is a marked liberalization of the state alcohol policy. Consequences of this liberalization can be seen at the global consumption level, and at the level of prevalence of many problems related to alcohol use.

Official data on the global consumption rate have lost their credibility since the alcohol market was freed from the state control. Regaining of the control over the consumption rate poses a very difficult problem. Estimates based on indirect data are unreliable and burdened with numerous errors.

Statistics of health problems associated with alcohol abuse seem to be the only credible data under the circumstances. The effect of alcohol on more nosological units than those traditionally noted should be regularly monitored in this situation. In the years 1988-1994 there has been a 15% increase in the number of deaths due to cirrhosis, a 50% increase in the number of first admissions for alcohol psychoses, and a 27% increase in the number of first admissions due to alcohol dependence.

The observed increase in alcohol (especially beer) consumption prevalence among younger adolescents, may influence the alcohol-related problems prevalence rate, including the problems of alcohol dependence, in the near future. The alcohol treatment facilities should be prepared for that.

Changes occurring in the field of norms and customs connected with alcohol use should be monitored as well. In the period of rapid socio-economic transition norms are much less stable.

**Key words:** socio-economic determinants / alcohol-related problems

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