

P03-228

THE CULTURE OF ALCOHOL USE: AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

M. Osain Welcome, V. Alekseevich Pereverzev

Belarusian State Medical University, Minsk, Belarus

This paper examines the general view of the culture of alcohol consumption in the African continent. Unlike in some European countries where alcohol use is part of the daily life of the people or is used, especially during meals, in Africa, generally, alcohol is used mostly during rituals, marriage ceremonies, clan/family festivities. During rituals, intoxicating power of alcohol is associated, sometimes with the supernatural power of the gods. Alcohol is also given as gifts during bride price ceremony. Statistical data confirm that majority of alcohol users in this continent are Christians and non-religious people. Lower proportion of alcohol consumption is seen in the Muslim community in relation to the Christians. Even though, some use alcohol as daily drink, generally intoxication (except during rituals) is considered a sin. The most especially used beverage is the native alcohol (obtained as a distillation product of sap of tree, mostly palm). The level of native distillation techniques determines the alcohol content in the various native alcoholic beverages. Alcohol content in the distillation product might vary between 30-70%. Some proportion of African communities use the tree sap without distillation. In recent times, most African communities have lost the power of control over the sale and use of alcoholic beverages, and this subsequently led to increase alcohol problems, including chronic alcoholism, especially among children. In conclusion, as a result the gradual fading of cultural norms, alcohol use nowadays, in African communities, generally, is open to the general population, regardless of age.