

The International Alcohol Control (IAC) Study— Evaluating the Impact of Alcohol Policies

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Background: This paper describes a new multicountry collaborative project to assess the impact of alcohol control policy. Longitudinal surveys of drinkers in a number of participating countries and analysis of the policy context allow for the assessment of change over time within countries and comparison between countries. The design of the study is modeled on the International Tobacco Control study and aims to assess the impact of alcohol policies in different cultural contexts on policy-related behaviors and alcohol consumption. A survey instrument and protocol for policy analysis have been developed by the initial participating countries: England, Scotland, Thailand, South Korea, and New Zealand. The first round of data collection is scheduled for 2011–2012.

Measurements: The survey instrument (International Alcohol Control [IAC] survey) measures key policy relevant behaviors: place and time of purchase, amounts purchased and price paid; ease of access to alcohol purchase; alcohol marketing measures; social supply; perceptions of alcohol affordability and availability and salience of price; perceptions of enforcement; people's experiences with specific alcohol restrictions; support for policy and consumption (typical quantity, frequency using beverage and location-specific measures). The Policy Analysis Protocol (PoLAP) assesses relevant aspects of the policy environment including regulation and implementation.

Results: It has proved feasible to design instruments to collect detailed data on behaviors relevant to alcohol policy change and to assess the policy environment in different cultural settings.

Conclusions: In a policy arena in which the interest groups and stakeholders have different perceptions of appropriate policy responses to alcohol-related harm, a robust methodology to assess the impact of policy will contribute to the debate.

Key Words: Alcohol Policy, Policy Analysis, Survey Instrument, International.

THIS PAPER DESCRIBES the development of a new international collaborative project to assess the impact of alcohol policy. It introduces the survey instrument that measures alcohol consumption and policy relevant variables such as prices paid, place of purchase, and exposure to marketing. It also describes the methodology, which is a

longitudinal survey within countries and a cross-country comparison.

The project is motivated by both the increased awareness of alcohol's contribution to the global burden of disease and injury and greater commitment internationally to implement effective policy to reduce the burden (Alleyne et al., 2010; Casswell and Thamarangsi, 2009). This awareness reflects better measurement of the extent and nature of harms, to the drinker's health (Rehm et al., 2009; World Health Organization, 2011a) and to the drinker's associates (Casswell et al., 2011) and also economic costs. These are extensive in mature alcohol markets, but there is also dramatic expansion of commercial alcohol into emerging markets in middle-income countries, many of which have very poorly developed policy responses.

The endorsement by the World Health Organization (WHO) member states of the global strategy to reduce harmful use of alcohol (World Health Organization, 2010b) at the 2010 World Health Assembly was the first significant international response to alcohol-related harm. While this is not a health treaty of the same ilk as the Framework Convention for Tobacco Control, it does mark an important development in global governance in relation to alcohol and this, plus the ensuing response by WHO (e.g., the Global Meeting of WHO National Counterparts on Alcohol and Health in

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