



STRONG CIDER SOLD IN SCOTLAND APPEARS TO BE ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY FOR DEPENDENT DRINKERS

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6 FOR DEPENDENT DRINKERS

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8 Sheron *et al* (Clinical Medicine, 2015) suggested strong cider (> 6.0% ABV) in the UK was
9 particularly associated with alcohol-related illnesses

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11 Beeston *et al* (2013) reported that in 2012 in Scotland 326,975 litres of pure alcohol were
12 sold as strong cider off-license excluding unknown sales in discount supermarkets, Lidl and
13 Aldi, whose share of total alcohol sales was thought to be 10%.

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15 To estimate the contribution made by ill drinkers' purchases of strong cider to total purchases
16 of strong cider in Scotland, we extrapolate from information obtained from two samples.

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18 **1. Acute general hospitals**

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20 In 2011/12, 24,742 unique patients age >19 were discharged from Scottish acute general
21 hospitals with alcohol-related diagnoses (ISD, 2013).

22
23 In that year we interviewed 190 patients age 19+ in acute general hospitals in Glasgow and
24 Edinburgh admitted with an alcohol-related condition (Black *et al*, 2014). Their age range
25 mirrored national hospital data except for a slightly lower % aged 65+. When averaged across
26 all patients the strong cider consumption in their past and/or a typical week was 42u/patient
27 (1 unit \equiv 8g ethanol).

28
29 If drinking that way for 1 week in 4 (13 weeks/year), the year's consumption per patient of
30 strong cider is 550u, which extrapolated to the 24,742 individual such patients admitted
31 across Scotland amounts to 14,293,550u = 142,936L pure alcohol sold as strong cider. This
32 accounts for 43.7% of sales of strong cider in that year.

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35 **2. Alcohol treatment services**

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37 We interviewed 449 patients attending or admitted to NHS alcohol services in Glasgow and
38 Edinburgh (no patient interviewed twice - if also seen in the general hospital they were not
39 re-interviewed). Such patients overwhelmingly meet clinical criteria for 'alcohol
40 dependence'. They consumed, on average, 59u/patient as strong cider in their past week
41 and/or typical drinking week: at 13 such weeks/year = 767u/year.

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43 The Scottish Health Survey (SHeS, 2014) estimates that 1% of the population are 'dependent'
44 drinkers (scoring 20+ on AUDIT) across the age span that corresponds to that of our sample
45 (i.e. mainly age 30 to 65). Using the Census estimate for that age group in Scotland, that
46 extrapolates to 55,410 individuals. If their consumption of cider was similar to that of our
47 patients, this accounts for (767 x 55,410) units = 424,994L pure alcohol sold as strong cider
48 per annum, slightly more than the reported national strong cider sales for that period.

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51 **Discussion**

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53 Our finding(2) suggests purchases of strong cider in national sales data could **all** be
54 accounted for by people dependent on alcohol. However, only some scored in surveys as
55 'dependent' would consume as heavily as those who attend treatment, making our
56 extrapolation somewhat excessive. Furthermore, a tiny proportion of strong cider is
57 expensive craft cider purchased by *aficionados*.

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3 On the other hand, if our conservative 13 weeks/year for their cider consumption was low,
4 estimates of cider purchased by dependent drinkers in Scotland over a year might exceed the
5 amount in national sales, even allowing for sales in Lidl/Aldi; and we are not *adding* our
6 estimate obtained in (1) above to the estimated total for dependent drinkers (2). However, the
7 estimate given in (1) adds weight to our conclusion from (2) that most if not all customers of
8 the cheap strong cider industry are dependent, and possibly ill, drinkers.
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10 11 12 References

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