

Alcohol among Students at the 1st Faculty of Medicine of Charles University: Prevalence of Use and Associated Risk Behaviours¹



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BACKGROUND: Students of medical faculties are encouraged to pursue a healthy lifestyle, but, on the other hand, they are subjected to extreme psychological stress, which can be considered as a possible cause of higher and more frequent consumption of addictive substances. **AIMS:** To examine the experience with alcohol use and related risk behaviours among students at the First Faculty of Medicine of Charles University in Prague, with special attention being focused on the symptoms of problem use and possible addiction. **DESIGN AND MEASUREMENTS:** The research design is a cross-sectional questionnaire survey; the questionnaire is composed of selected questions from the ESPAD 2007 questionnaire and a complete CAGE screening test. 53% of the probands obtained by means of the self-selection sampling method filled out the questionnaire in electronic form, 47% of the probands nominated through random group sampling filled in the paper-and-pencil ver-

sion. **SAMPLE:** The sample consists of 807 students at the First Faculty of Medicine of Charles University in Prague (593 females and 214 males), which corresponds to one quarter of all students enrolled in 13 majors at this faculty. **RESULTS:** 88% of the students from our sample had consumed alcohol in the last thirty days. 19% of the students reached a score higher than 1 in the CAGE test (17% of females and 27% of males and 17% of medical students and 26% of those from non-medical fields of study). The differences between genders and fields of study are significant at the 0.01 level of statistical significance. Higher scores on the CAGE test are associated with more frequent consumption, drunkenness, the combination of the abuse of alcohol and other substances, and risky behaviour (drinking alone, drinking before noon, and having random sex under the influence of alcohol). **CONCLUSIONS:** In comparison to the general population of the same age cohort, the student population at the First Faculty of Medicine appears to be associated with a lower risk of problem alcohol use than other faculties and the general population.

1/ The research was conducted as part of a bachelor's thesis for the academic programme in addictology (academic year 2009/2010).

KEY WORDS: ALCOHOL – CAGE – COLLEGE STUDENTS – RISK BEHAVIOUR – PROBLEM DRUG USE

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