

ABSTRACT

AIMS. The aims of the thesis were:

- to analyse women's social conditions and lifestyle in relation to alcohol dependence/abuse and various indicators of alcohol use
- to analyse prevalence and development during a five year period of various indicators of problem drinking
- to compare levels of alcohol related problems and social conditions among women in a general population sample and in a clinical sample

METHODS. The studies are a part of a longitudinal population based study on women and Alcohol in Göteborg. The project started in 1986 with a screening questionnaire to 3.130 women in a defined area in Göteborg and to a similar number of women attending outpatients clinics in the same area.

Women were selected to personal interview based on responses to the questionnaire. Thus in 1990, 479 women were selected from the population sample and 331 from the clinical sample. A follow up was performed in 1995 with interviews of the same subjects as well as a new cohort of younger women. The interview comprised questions on family background, social factors, lifestyle as well as questions on volume and frequency of alcohol use. Alcohol related diagnoses were made according to DSM-III-R.

RESULTS: Women identified in clinical samples had in general poorer social conditions than women in the general population. The association between dependence/abuse and social class depended on how these were assessed. There was also more women with alcohol dependence/abuse in the clinical samples than in the population sample.

Most women with alcohol dependence/abuse had activity patterns not very different from women without alcohol problems. Poor conditions in childhood and adolescent predicted disability pension and high levels of sick leave. More than a third of the women with disability pension had a diagnosis of alcohol dependence/abuse. Women with problem drinking in general population tended to reduce levels of drinking during a five year follow up.

CONCLUSION: Social background, social network and family conditions are important determinants of alcohol use in women but the causal pathways are complex, and social and family conditions are also influenced by alcohol use.

In prevention and treatment it is important to take into account aspects of social and family life, since deterioration of social network, work and family life may trigger alcohol use.

KEY WORDS: women, alcohol, education, occupation, social network, leisure time, longitudinal, cross-over