Does Beverage Type and Drinking Context Matter in an Alcohol-Related Injury? Evidence from Emergency Department Patients in Latin America.

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INTRODUCTION: Previous studies have already substantiated alcohol’s causal role in injuries. Yet the role that alcoholic beverage preferences and the drinking context play in the risk for injury is still under-investigated. In this study a cross-national comparison of the association between alcohol and injury focusing on beverage type preference and the drinking context is reported.

METHODS: Emergency department injured patients were interviewed in eight countries from the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region. Data on the type of alcoholic beverage, total alcohol volume, and the place where the injury occurred were obtained from patients who reported any alcohol consumption within six hours prior to being injured. Patients who did not drink prior to injury were also asked about their typical drinking pattern and the injury place. Differences within- and between-groups were evaluated regarding patients’ typical drinking and drinking before injury.

RESULTS: Beer was the most prevalent beverage type usually consumed among injured patients across countries, however, patients who drank before injury had a higher typical consumption of spirits than those not drinking prior to injury. The total alcohol volume typically consumed and drinking in public settings were also found to be positively associated with alcohol-related injury.

CONCLUSIONS: A similar beverage-specific association with alcohol-related injury was found across LAC countries, mainly attributed to beer consumption, and spirits drinkers seem to have a greater chance of becoming involved in injury events. Future prevention strategies should inform the public about harms from drinking associated with the context in which drinking takes place.