Treatment for alcohol dependence in primary care compared to specialist care: a randomized controlled trial

2017-01-12

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Prevalence estimates

Dependence and social problems
50,000

Dependence without social problems
250,000

Misuse
300,000

Hazardous consumption
450,000

No alcohol problems
6.5 million Swedes > 15 years

(Andréasson et al., 2011
Berglund et al. 2010,
Takker et al. 2004)
Treatment gap
Barriers to seeking treatment

1. Stigma/shame

Ref:
Wallhed Finn et al., 2014 *Sub use and misuse*;
Andréasson et al., 2013 *Alcohol & Alcoholism*;
Schomerus et al., 2011 *Alcohol & Alcoholism*
**Primary care**

One way to reduce the stigma is to also offer treatment in primary care.

**Screening and brief interventions in primary care (PC)**
(Alvarez-Bueno et al., 2015; O´Donnell et al., 2014)

**Few studies of alcohol dependence treatment in PC**
(Berger et al., 2013; O´Malley et al., 2013; Oslin et al., 2013; Karhuvaara et al., 2007; Kiritze-Topot et al., 2004; Drummond et al., 1990)
The "15 method"
AUDIT>15; 15 minutes

1: Screening Brief intervention

2: Assessment with feedback
   "Drinkers’ Check up"

3: a) Pharmacological treatment
   b) Psychological treatment
      "Guided self change"
The study

- **Aim:** to study the effects of the 15-method in primary care compared to treatment as usual in a specialist addiction unit

- **Method:** RCT, non-inferiority

- **Hypothesis:** the 15-method carried out in primary care, is equally effective as treatment as usual in a specialized addiction unit.

- **Participants:** 288 adults fulfilling criteria for alcohol dependence
TREATMENT OF ALCOHOL DEPENDENCE IN PRIMARY CARE
Outcome measures

Primary:
• change of weekly alcohol consumption measured in grams of alcohol, assessed with TLFB30

Secondary:
• days with heavy drinking per week (TLFB30)
• hazardous and harmful drinking (AUDIT)
• degree of alcohol dependence (ICD-10 criteria & SADD)
• consequences of drinking (SIP)
• symptoms of anxiety and depression (HADS)
• health related quality of life (EQ 5D-5L)
• biomarkers (CDT, AST, ALT & GGT)
• satisfaction with treatment (CSQ)
• 6 months follow up
Randomized

Allocation

Primary Care
Allocated to intervention (n=144)
- Received allocated intervention (n=133)

Lost to follow-up (n=34)
Analysed (n=109)

Specialist care
Allocated to intervention (n=144)
- Received allocated intervention (n=138)

Follow-Up
6 months (n=232)
81%

Analysis
6 months (n=228)
79%

Lost to follow-up (n=22)
Analysed (n=119)
## Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>SC (n=144)</th>
<th>PC (n=144)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>% (n)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>47 (67)</td>
<td>43 (62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>mean (SD)</td>
<td>range</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>54 (12)</td>
<td>25-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>56 (11)</td>
<td>23-77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>% (n)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 years or less</td>
<td>44 (63)</td>
<td>45 (65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 12 years</td>
<td>56 (81)</td>
<td>54 (78)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of income</td>
<td>% (n)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>employment</td>
<td>73 (104)</td>
<td>74 (105)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pension</td>
<td>22 (31)</td>
<td>22 (31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>5 (7)</td>
<td>4 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil status</td>
<td>% (n)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>married/co-habiting</td>
<td>64 (92)</td>
<td>58 (83)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>live alone</td>
<td>36 (51)</td>
<td>42 (60)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Type of treatment

### Participants with >0 visits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Treatment</th>
<th>SC (n=138)</th>
<th>PC (n=133)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feedback only</td>
<td>% (n)</td>
<td>4% (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacological treatment (only)</td>
<td>% (n)</td>
<td>18% (25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological treatment (only)</td>
<td>% (n)</td>
<td>33% (45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacological and psychological treatment</td>
<td>% (n)</td>
<td>45% (62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of visits</td>
<td>mean (SD)</td>
<td>4.9 (2.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>range</td>
<td>1-14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results

Weekly consumption of alcohol in grams at baseline and 6 months follow up (n=228)
Which means...

- Patients in primary care drank 29.8 grams more per week (95% CI -10.2 - 69.7; p-value 0.15) compared to patients treated in specialist setting.
More results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>SU Baseline n=144</th>
<th>SU 6 months n=119</th>
<th>PC Baseline n=144</th>
<th>PC 6 months n=109</th>
<th>p value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly consumption of alcohol (gram)</td>
<td>mean (SD)</td>
<td>343.3 (324.8)</td>
<td>181.9 (142.8)</td>
<td>367.4 (215.8)</td>
<td>224.2 (224.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy drinking (days)</td>
<td>mean (SD)</td>
<td>11.9 (8.0)</td>
<td>6.8 (7.8)</td>
<td>13.1 (8.0)</td>
<td>7.9 (8.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICD-10</td>
<td>mean (SD)</td>
<td>4.3 (1.0)</td>
<td>2.2 (1.7)</td>
<td>4.2 (1.9)</td>
<td>2.1 (1.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUDIT</td>
<td>mean (SD)</td>
<td>23.2 (4.9)</td>
<td>13.5 (6.5)</td>
<td>22.4 (5.9)</td>
<td>14.1 (7.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIP</td>
<td>mean (SD)</td>
<td>16.0 (6.5)</td>
<td>7.8 (5.7)</td>
<td>14.9 (7.0)</td>
<td>8.0 (5.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDT</td>
<td>mean (SD)</td>
<td>2.3 (2.0)</td>
<td>1.9 (1.7)</td>
<td>2.5 (2.1)</td>
<td>2.4 (2.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Outcomes in proportions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At 6 months follow up</th>
<th>PC  n=109</th>
<th>SC  n=119</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol consumption below the Swedish national guidelines for hazardous consumption</td>
<td>17 %</td>
<td>19 %</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUDIT score men 0-7; women 0-5</td>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICD 10 criteria 0-2</td>
<td>65 %</td>
<td>59 %</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUDIT score =&lt;19</td>
<td>81 %</td>
<td>81 %</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From 31 to 19
Severity of dependence matters

- **Moderate dependence**
  3-4 ICD-10 criteria
  17.0 grams
  (95% CI -21.1 - 55.0)
  p-value 0.38

- **Severe dependence**
  5-6 ICD-10 criteria
  57.0 grams
  (95% CI -23.7 - 137.8)
  p-value 0.17
Conclusions

- Alcohol dependence, and especially individuals with moderate dependence, can be successfully treated by general practitioners in primary care.

- The results indicate that a larger proportion of those in need can get access to effective alcohol treatment.
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Main supervisor

Anders Hammarberg
PhD, Co supervisor

Thank you!

Victoria Andersson
Project coordinator
Nurse

Sven Wåhlin
MD