

Alcohol Problems Often Missed by Doctors if Patients Not Intoxicated



Doctors often miss alcohol problems in their patients who are not intoxicated at the time of their visit, a new study finds.

The researchers analyzed studies that included a total of 20,000 patients assessed for alcohol problems by medical staff. They found general practitioners identified 40 percent of problem drinkers, hospital physicians recognized 50 percent, and mental health specialists identified 55 percent, Science Daily reports.

"This study highlights that clinical identification of alcohol problems is challenging in busy clinical environments," lead researcher Dr. Alex J. Mitchell of the University of Leicester in Great Britain, said in a news release. "When clinicians try and spot alcohol problems they often miss patients who have serious alcohol problems but who are not currently intoxicated."

He noted that doctors are not always sure what questions to ask patients, or what screening tests to use. He added that in general, patients with alcohol problems admitted to them when asked.

The study appears in the British Journal of Psychiatry.

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