

Editorial: Alcohol harms, alcohol use disorder predictors, alcohol-free mock beverages, and health and social services

One of the core aims for which IJADR strives is to foster a comparative understanding of alcohol use and alcohol problems in a spirit of international cooperation. As editors, we are proud to state that this issue of IJADR presents international research from projects based in South-East Asia, Europe (Finland), and North America (United States). The first two articles are a protocol paper by Rehm et al. on the role of alcohol consumption and alcohol control policies in Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and an empirical paper by Tam et al. on cultural factors and neighbourhood factors in predicting alcohol use disorder among young Mexican American men and women. The remaining three papers were originally presented at the 49th Annual Alcohol Epidemiology Symposium of the Kettil Bruun Society (KBS). They describe mixed methods research into alcohol-free mock beverage consumption in Thailand (Talek & Wichaidit, 2025), epidemiological research using health systems data (Virolainen et al., 2025), and population survey research examining harm to others from alcohol, cannabis and other drugs (Greenfield et al., 2025).

Increasingly the field is requesting pre-registration of hypotheses and methods, and in some instances “protocol papers” are published (Eysenbach, 2004; Gorman, 2019), wherein the results can be subsequently published in the same journal. *IJADR* has rarely included protocol papers, but in this issue, we present a protocol paper of a study seeking to understand important relationships between alcohol consumption and its regional public health precedents and impacts (Rehm et al., 2025).

Rehm and colleagues (2025) present a protocol for modelling the role of alcohol consumption and alcohol control policies for economic development and health in 2000–2023 in South-East Asia. The paper acknowledges that economic development generally leads to higher life expectancy and an increase in the number of people consuming alcohol. Also, given that alcohol consumption is a major risk factor for many diseases, the authors hypothesise that in turn this increased consumption of alcohol should reduce life expectancy, and slow down economic development. Intervention points, such as alcohol control policies, may however reduce consumption and lessen adverse effects of alcohol use on life expectancy and the economy. The protocol outlines how state-of-the-art modelling will enable the aim of the study, to quantify the interrelations between alcohol control policies, levels and patterns of consumption, life expectancy, and economic development, to be met. The study will provide critical

public health information on the role of alcohol in economic development in a key global region.

The study by Tam and colleagues (2025) focused on understanding alcohol use disorder (AUD) among young Mexican American men and women residing in the US-Mexico border region. Tam et al. sought to examine the role of cultural factors (acculturative stress and ethnic identity) as mediators of two neighbourhood factors (area-level proportions of people of Mexican Origin and distance from the US-Mexican border), in predicting alcohol use disorder (AUD). They found that the two neighbourhood factors had only direct associations with AUD, and these associations were apparent for women only. Acculturative stress was associated with AUD for both men and women; the stronger the acculturative stress the greater the likelihood of having an AUD. However, ethnic identity did not emerge as a predictor of AUD for both men and women, contrary to previous findings. The authors point to the value of the findings in highlighting the potential role of cultural factors (specifically, acculturation) in AUD intervention efforts for young Mexican-American men and women. Additionally, the findings suggest that neighbourhood characteristics such as proximity to the US-Mexico border and ethnic density may be worth considering when deciding where and amongst whom to target AUD interventions for young Mexican Americans.

Alcohol-free mock beverages are a growing commodity in many jurisdictions internationally, with much research focusing on how these beverages affect drinking in countries where alcohol consumption is common (Miller & Wright, 2024; Perman-Howe et al., 2024). Typically, consumption of these beverages has been more common among heavier alcohol consumers (Piatkowski et al., 2024). Muslim-majority countries have lower levels of alcohol consumption, due to alcohol consumption being prohibited in the Quran. Talek and Wichaidit (2025) set out to investigate whether the consumption of alcohol-free mock beverages by Muslims in Thailand is associated with increases in their own alcohol consumption, and the degree to which this relationship may be explained by attitudes toward alcohol. The authors use a combination of quantitative survey measures, and content analysis from qualitative interviews to explore the relationship between mock beverage consumption, alcohol consumption, attitudes towards alcohol, and motivations for mock beverage consumption. Mock beverage consumption was associated with alcohol consumption, independent of participants' attitudes towards alcohol consumption. The authors discuss the implications these findings have for public health,

Muslim communities, and for the local community in southern Thailand. *Guest Editor: Nic Taylor*

In recent decades, healthcare systems worldwide have sought to address the need for more effective and integrated service delivery models to address inequities in healthcare. Virolainen and colleagues' (2025) paper aimed to explore the impact of a comprehensive integration of health and social services in Finland among patients with alcohol use disorders. A key focus of the integration was to allocate resources to remote services to meet the demands of patients in the sparsely populated region of North Karelia. The study found that increased provision of remote contacts had positive effects, as alcohol problems could be identified in a more timely manner. Additionally, the authors discuss how, while remote contacts may support better access to services, this was not without its challenges. In particular, the study found that emergency care service use increased among patients in substance use treatment, potentially indicating that remote service contact may not be sufficient for all individuals with alcohol use disorders. As such, despite a promising start to health care reform, notable unmet health care needs continue to exist for people with alcohol use disorders in Finland. *Guest editor: Megan Cook*

The article by Greenfield and colleagues (2025) presents survey data gathered through adapting the Burden Assessment Scale. The aim was to examine the degree of burden experienced by those reporting second hand alcohol and/or drug harm resulting from another person's use of alcohol, cannabis, and drugs other than cannabis. This study also explored the psychometrics of the seven-item alcohol and/or drug harm burden scale, since the burden items had not previously been applied in this framework of second hand alcohol and drug harms. The strength of this paper is the novel adaptation of the Burden Assessment Scale to capture strain related to caring for someone using substances. The new scale was found to have good psychometric properties, and the study also found that around two in five people in their sample of US adults with various second hand alcohol and other drug harms expressed feeling emotionally harmed or neglected, or had family friction-related burdens from others' alcohol and other drug use. The authors state that family support interventions and policy remedies to mitigate these burdens are needed. They also highlight that strategies developed for alcohol-related harms are likely to differ from those for specific other substances and their combinations. In addition, the authors outline that any future public health work should aim to reduce further stigmatisation of people who use substances. *Guest editor: Jack Martin.*

As guest editors, we are proud to publish the second set of papers from KBS 2024 in this issue.

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