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**Alcohol** responsible for up to 70% of all **A&E** admissions as experts renew minimum unit price calls;   
Research suggests that booze-related injuries and other problems cost a single hospital £1million a year  
  
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Booze was to blame for 70% of **A&E** admissions at weekends in one hospital .

Research at the inner city hospital in the North East found each patient costs the NHS £250-850, hitting the site for £1million a year.

The most problems were from drunken men aged 18 to 24 with trauma injuries or mental health issues.

The research suggests that **alcohol** costs the taxpayer tens of millions of pounds in **emergency** care throughout the UK every year.

Researchers checked case notes of people presenting themselves at the **A&E** department of an unidentified hospital over a period of four separate weeks in 2011, and then tracked the follow up care for the next year.

They then carried out breath tests on **A&E** patients during the same four weeks of 2012-13 to find out who had been drinking.

Of the 5121 patients checked in 2010-11 12% (636) were linked to excess **alcohol**.

In 2012-13, this figure had risen to 15% (720 out of 6526). But analysis showed that during 2012-13 the **alcohol** related attendance varied substantially from 4% to 60% on week days, but rose to 70% at weekends.

Nearly 500 people (498) tested positive for **alcohol** on the breath test.

People who didn't live in the city were much more likely to test positive than local residents, suggesting that city centres attract revellers from elsewhere, while hospitals and other public services in city centres pick up the tab, say the researchers.

Read more: Children as young as 10 referred to specialists for underage drinking problems

They calculated the costs of treating **alcohol** related cases, based on the tests, procedures, outpatient appointments and inpatient stays detailed in the patients' hospital records.

These ranged from an average of £250 up to £850, if admission to hospital was required. That adds up to an annual bill of £1 million but excludes ambulance service and police costs.

"This indicates a significant NHS burden if all such **emergency departments** in the UK are sustaining similar demands associated with**alcohol** related attendance," say the researchers writing online in **Emergency** Medicine Journal.

"Although older people may cost more per patient, younger people as a group are more costly to the NHS because they have more**alcohol** related attendances," they add.

"Our results suggest that **emergency departments** would benefit from routinely providing staff to cover the night and early morning shifts, particularly at weekends, to cope with the high proportion of **alcohol** related attendances at these times."

In a linked editorial, Dr Clifford Mann, **emergency** care consultant at Taunton and Somerset NHS Foundation Trust, points out that in England alone, one million hospital visits every year are related to **alcohol**, at a cost to the NHS of £3.5 million.

Hospital admissions for disease and injuries associated with **alcohol** rose 100% between 2003 and 2013.

"Current national and international data describing the financial burden of **alcohol** are dramatic, yet the response of governments has been woefully inadequate," he writes.

**Alcohol** is too cheap and too readily available, he says, reiterating the call made by the Royal College of **Emergency** Medicine and many other medical organisations for a minimum unit pricing for **alcohol** of £0.50.

"Currently it is perfectly feasible to purchase a volume of **alcohol** that represents a safe weekly maximum for less than £10. **Alcohol** at this price is cheaper than bottled water," he insists.

"The economic, social, and medical consequences of current **alcohol** strategies create a compelling argument for improved legislation and regulation of **alcohol** sales," he writes.

Public Health England estimates that the total annual cost to society of **alcohol** is £21billion, which compares with the total cost of £2billion for running every **A&E** in the UK, he points out.