

Quitting smoking and change in alcohol consumption in the International Tobacco Control (ITC) Four Country Survey

Christopher W. Kahler, Ron Borland, Andrew Hyland, Sherry A. McKee, Richard J. O'Connor, Geoffrey T. Fong, K. Michael Cummings

Abstract

Although frequent heavy drinking has been associated with decreased odds of quitting smoking, the extent to which smoking cessation is associated with decreased alcohol consumption is less clear. The present study examined over a 2-year period whether individuals who quit smoking for at least 6 months, compared to those making a quit attempt but continuing to smoke and to those not making any attempt to quit smoking, showed greater reductions in drinking frequency, average weekly quantity of alcohol consumption, and frequency of heavy drinking. Data were drawn from the International Tobacco Control Four Country Survey, a prospective cohort study of smokers in Australia, Canada, the UK, and the US. A total of 3614 participants provided alcohol data at one study wave and were re-interviewed 2 years later regarding smoking and alcohol use. Consistent with prior studies, individuals who drank heavily (4+/5+ drinks for women and men, respectively) more than once a week had especially low rates of quitting smoking. There was little evidence, however, that those who achieved sustained smoking cessation made greater reductions in drinking compared to those who continued to smoke. These results were consistent across countries and sexes and did not differ significantly by heaviness of smoking. Results indicate that quitting smoking, in and of itself, does not lead to meaningful changes in alcohol use. Therefore, interventions and policies directed towards increasing smoking cessation are unlikely to affect rates of hazardous drinking unless they include specific elements that address alcohol consumption.

Recommended Citation:

Kahler CW, Borland R, Hyland A, McKee SA, O'Connor RJ, Fong GT, et al. Quitting smoking and change in alcohol consumption in the International Tobacco Control (ITC) Four Country Survey. *Drug Alcohol Depend* 2010 Jul;110(1-2):101-107.

Link to PDF: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0376871610000682>