

Harm to Others from Drinking:

Patterns in Nine Societies

edited by

Anne-Marie Laslett, Robin Room,
Orratai Waleewong, Oliver Stanesby and Sarah Callinan



World Health
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centre for alcohol
policy research

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Thailand

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Foreword

Measuring and Reducing Harm to Others from Alcohol

In communities and societies across the world, the harmful use of alcohol causes an array of health and social problems not only to those that drink alcohol, but also to those around them – to intimate partners, other family members and friends, colleagues and members of the community. Harms from others' drinking include violence, injury, child abuse and neglect, financial problems and harms that affect relationships and the quality of people's lives. As underlined in the World Health Organization (WHO) Global strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol, special attention needs to be given to reducing harm to people other than the drinker.

Documenting and developing the approaches to reduce alcohol's harm to others is an important area highlighted in the WHO strategy. This joint program of research between WHO, the Thai Health Promotion Foundation (ThaiHealth) and collaborating investigators in nine high, middle- and low-income countries, sets out to study the magnitude and scope of alcohol's harm to others in general populations and how it is encountered and dealt with in response agencies like the police, hospitals, social welfare offices and women's shelters and support centers.

This book draws together the results of national surveys in Thailand, Chile, India, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Australia and New Zealand. It describes and compares harms from others' drinking cross-nationally and focuses on different aspects of alcohol's harm to others in each country, for instance, the effects of coworkers' drinking in Lao People's Democratic Republic and harms to children from adults' drinking in Vietnam.

While drinkers with alcohol use disorders also need services and support to reduce the social harms and health problems they experience, this book adds weight to the need for policies that protect those affected by others' drinking and services that assist them. It further strengthens WHO's arguments for policies that increase the price of alcohol and limit the availability and promotion of alcohol, such as in WHO's SAFER initiative - the newest WHO-led roadmap to support governments in taking practical steps to improve health and well-being through addressing the harmful use of alcohol. The magnitude and range of the effects underline the outcomes of inaction and indicate why substantial attention is needed to accelerate progress towards the WHO Sustainable Development Goals.

This book highlights the social burden and human costs of harmful use of alcohol to others than drinkers in nine societies. I recommend this book, not only to those responsible for health and social policies of the societies where the study was implemented, but to public health leaders and policy makers worldwide. It also deserves the attention of governmental agencies dealing with alcohol-related problems, the research community, non-governmental organizations, the media and the general public.

Dévora Kestel

Director, Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse.
World Health Organization

Foreword

Alcohol is a major risk factor for health and a devastating obstacle to national development. Globally it ranks ninth among risk factors in the 2015 Global Burden of Disease analysis report. In Thailand alcohol consumption contributes around a quarter of the burden of diseases and exacts billions of Baht equivalent of economic loss each year. This, of course, is without taking into account a full measure of a myriad of other social problems stemming from drinking alcohol. Alcohol's harm has a vast social dimension in Thailand, not only affecting the users themselves but also adversely affecting their families and communities, in essence, damaging the social fabric of society. Data on and understanding of "alcohol's harms to other" is thus essential and we are fortunate to have this publication by a team of multinational researchers to address this gap.

ThaiHealth, as an autonomous government agency funded by taxes on alcohol and tobacco, set up to "inspire, motivate, coordinate, and empower" the health promotion movement in Thailand, is pleased to have formed an alliance with the World Health Organization (WHO) under a Memorandum of Understanding on Health Promotion (2015-2020), particularly to lend support to the Harm to Others from Drinking Project for low and middle income countries: Chile, India, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam in Phase I and II. The project involved a general population survey in each country, with the addition of Lao People's Democratic Republic, and these surveys provide the basis for this book.

ThaiHealth sincerely appreciates the longstanding partnership with WHO on alcohol control as well as the hard working team of researchers who have shown great wisdom and exercised much effort in developing this key publication. We hope that this book can serve to help readers of all backgrounds to recognize the grave burden and harms of alcohol to our society and help revitalize the global and national momentum on implementing alcohol control.



Dr Supreda Adulyanon
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The academic institutions of the principal investigators also generously supported this important work over a substantial period of time. The study leaders and research organizations are listed by country: Australia: Robin Room (the Centre for Alcohol Policy Research, La Trobe University); and Anne-Marie Laslett (National Drug Research Institute, Curtin University and the Centre for Alcohol Policy Research, La Trobe University); Chile: Pamela Florenzano

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