

Alcohol Consumption and its Potential Ability to Predict Health Perceptions

G. Joseph and J. Zorland

Previous research suggests that there may be an association between level of alcohol consumption and Health Related Quality of Life (HRQL). HRQL consists of two dimensions: perceived mental and physical health. This presentation will present the results of a study assessing the relation between alcohol consumption and perceived mental and physical health among patients presenting at two emergency department in urban Georgia (n=2906). The alcohol consumed within the past 30 days and number of days binge drinking (5+ drinks in one sitting) were self-reported by the participants. Perceptions of mental and physical health were assessed using the SF-12. Hierarchical regression analyses were conducted which statistically controlled for potentially confounding variables. The results of these analyses suggest that a greater number of alcohol use days are associated with significantly higher perceived mental health. Conversely, the number of binge drinking days in the past 30 days were significantly associated with lower perceived mental health. The relation between alcohol consumption and perceived physical health failed to reach statistical significance. The results of this study can be used to inform practices in emergency departments. Specifically, screening for risky alcohol use and alerting patients to the potential negative impacts of binge drinking may reduce such risky behavior, thus positively impacting mental health. Furthermore, these findings support the need for further research to explore the mechanisms by which drinking in moderation might positively impact mental health. Finally, the efficacy of utilizing a harm reduction model in addressing alcohol consumption should be explored.

Keywords: alcohol, binge-drinking, perceived mental health, perceived physical health, SF-12, intervention

<http://rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/>