



LESS ALCOHOL WEBINAR SERIES

HEALTH WARNINGS LABELS OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES: OPPORTUNITIES FOR INFORMED AND HEALTHIER CHOICES

7 OCTOBER 2021 - 13:30-15:00 CET

Why is this webinar series needed?

The labelling of alcoholic beverages is a recommended World Health Organization (WHO) intervention to increase awareness of alcohol consumption and ensure that consumers can make informed decisions (1-4). Current labelling practices across countries are not standardised (5,6) instead of pharmaceuticals, food products, and soft drinks. Some countries have dedicated initiatives to fill this gap (7-10). The situation differs among the types of alcoholic beverages, i.e. wines, beers, spirits. According to WHO 2016 data (11), most countries require disclosing the percentage of pure alcohol in labels of alcoholic beverages. Still, only a minority requires nutritional information, such as calories, additives, energy value, allergens, ingredients, and vitamins. Overall, less than a third of responding countries mandate health and safety warning labels on containers or advertisements. In most cases, warning labels

focus on underage drinking or drink-driving. Only a few countries require indicating the number of standard drinks in the container of alcoholic beverage labels.

Currently, the mechanisms to regulate the labelling of alcoholic beverages are a combination of global (e.g. Codex Alimentarius (9)), regional (e.g. trade agreements (12), customs unions (13-16)), national norms (e.g. those related to food standards or specific for alcohol) and voluntary industry commitments (17). There is overwhelming evidence that voluntary industry commitments on labelling practices are insufficient to tackle the inconsistency, inadequacy, and poor quality of alcohol labelling (2,18-21).

Health warnings on alcoholic beverages labels increase consumers' awareness of the risks associated with drinking. The evidence is less robust regarding their impact on reducing consumption or changing individual

behaviours (1,22,23). The inconsistencies in displaying information, the scale of interventions, assessment methodologies, among other factors, have resulted in diversified practices and outcomes, leaving consumers without critical information to make informed decisions.

What do we aim to achieve?

This webinar aims to take stock of recent evidence regarding the use of health warning labels and the conditions for their effectiveness, illustrate innovative country initiatives and discuss the possible role of

consumer associations and civil society to hold interested parties to account.

Who should participate?

The target audience includes those working in public health, local and national alcohol policy, policymakers, government officials, researchers, civil society groups, consumer associations, media and those new to alcohol research or practice in line with the WHO guidance.

Participation in this event is by invitation. If you have not received one, you can still register; your application will be considered and subject to a declaration of interest.

For more information, contact us:

lessalcohol@who.int

Less Alcohol Unit – Department of Health Promotion

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