

Alcohol and Other Drugs

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PREVALENCE OF DRUNK DRIVING IN GHANA

doi:10.1136/injuryprev-2012-040590a.1

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Background Alcohol impairment is an established risk factor for the incidence and severity of road traffic crashes. Whereas the developed countries have dedicated resources to combating this menace, drunk-driving research and preventive programs are at rudimentary stages in developing countries. The objective of this study was to establish baseline prevalence of drunk-driving in Ghana.

Methods Systematic roadside random sampling was used to determine the prevalence of drunk-driving in the country. Alco-sensor and breathalyzers were used for screening drivers to determine whether they have ingested any alcohol before driving their vehicles. If alcohol was detected, a second test involving administration of disposable mouthpieces to establish the actual volume of alcohol in their breaths was conducted.

Results 2,736 drivers were randomly stopped and their BrAC measured with the breathalyzers. In all, 8.7% had detectable alcohol in their breaths with 5.5% exceeding the legal limit of 0.08%. BrAC measurements were converted to BAC using the BrAC:BAC ratio of 2,300:1 for easy understanding in Ghana. A stratified analysis shows that 64% of the drivers who tested positive for alcohol recorded BAC exceeding the legal limit. 19% had BAC between 0.05 and 0.08% whilst the remainder 17% had ingested alcohol ranging between 0.001 to 0.05.

Conclusion Drunk-driving prevalence in Ghana is very high compared with many industrialized countries. It is therefore recommended that enhanced enforcement, driver education and stricter laws such as reduced alcohol limits for young and novice drivers are encouraged to combat the incidence of drunk-driving and their associated traffic injuries in Ghana.