

Blood alcohol level tests in nightlife recreational settings as a preventive tool

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Abstract

Background:

Getting drunk is a common practice in the nightlife context and is related to risk behaviors. One potentially preventive strategy would be to conduct breathalyzer (blood alcohol content level-BAC) tests in situ, encouraging the young people to take responsibility. The aim of this study is to evaluate the efficacy of such a measure.

Method:

A sample of 555 young people were interviewed in the most popular nightlife recreational areas in three Spanish cities. After they answered to a brief questionnaire, the breathalyzer test was done and they were then informed of the results and also informed about the results, telling them what the maximum authorized rate of alcohol in expired air was for driving. After, they were asked about their drinking intentions for the rest of the night, and if they were going to be driving.

Results:

Only 21.6% stated that they would stop drinking or drink less, while a similar percentage (21.5%) said they would drink even more than they had intended after finding out their BAC. The logistic regression indicated that the decision to drink more or less was influenced by the BAC level, the amount they had planned to drink prior to the test and high scores on “sensation seeking.” Those who decided to drive had lower BAC levels and had planned to drink less prior to the interview.

Conclusions:

Prevention strategies involving attempts to change behavior through informing drinkers of their own BAC are controversial, since although for some it leads to their drinking less, in other cases the young people end up drinking more than they had planned.

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