

Alcohol misuse in the developing world

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BACKGROUND:

Alcohol misuse is an issue that expands beyond its physical and psychological consequences. Over consumption of, and addiction to alcohol is a global health challenge and there is growing concern it stifles economic development. It is through understanding the nature of alcohol misuse that health professionals can act as advocates for the best use of resources.

Our aim was to explore:

1. How alcohol consumption is changing in the developing world
2. To what extent alcohol misuse and dependence is contributing to morbidity and mortality in the developing world.
3. Whether alcohol misuse and dependence is fuelled by, or contributes to poverty.
4. Can public policy curb alcohol misuse in the developing world?

METHOD:

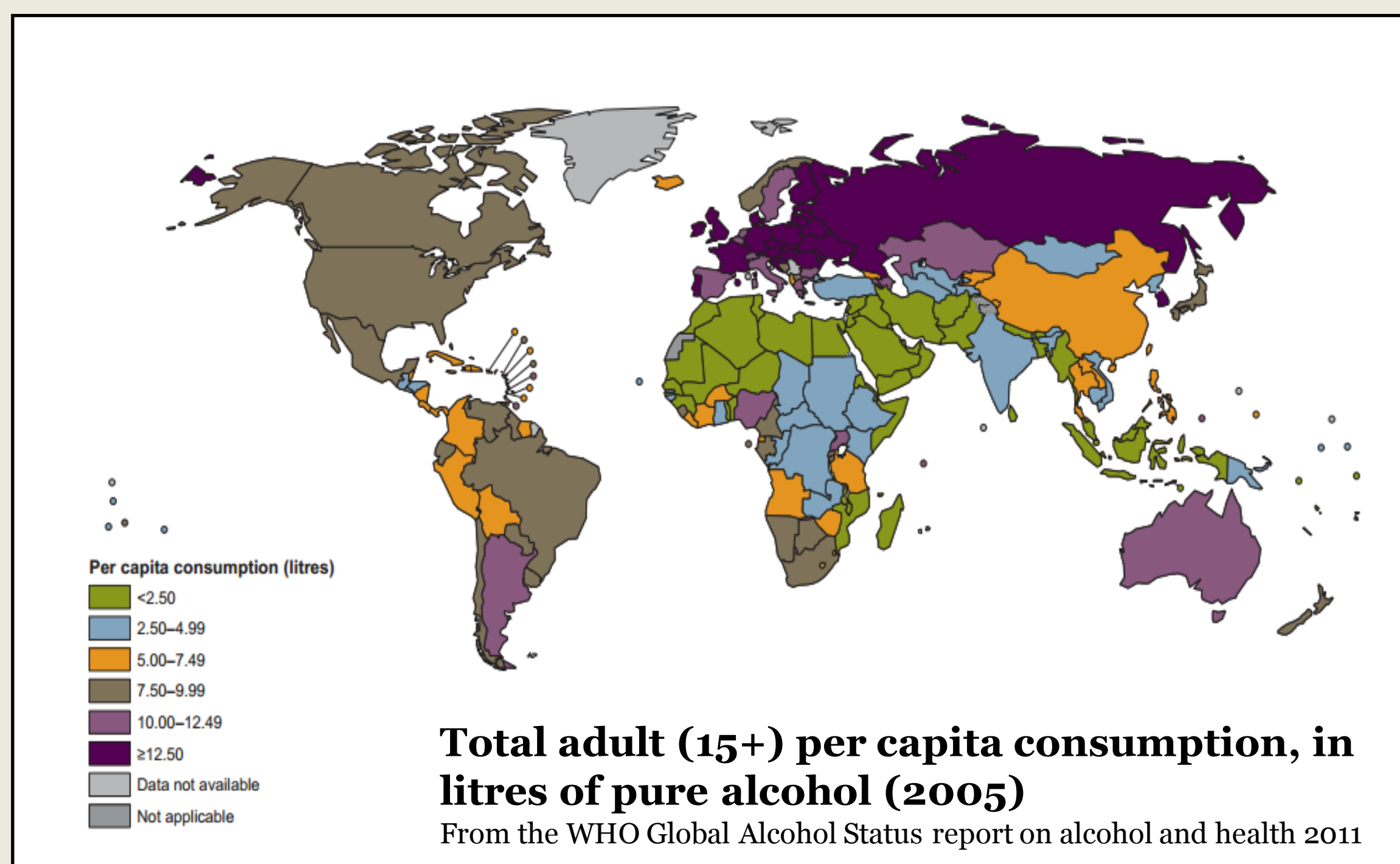
We conducted a review of the literature on alcohol in the developing world and consumption patterns around the world:

- ❖ NHS Evidence database and PubMed
- ❖ Papers reviewed including journal papers, WHO reports and government statistics.

DISCUSSION:

Consumption

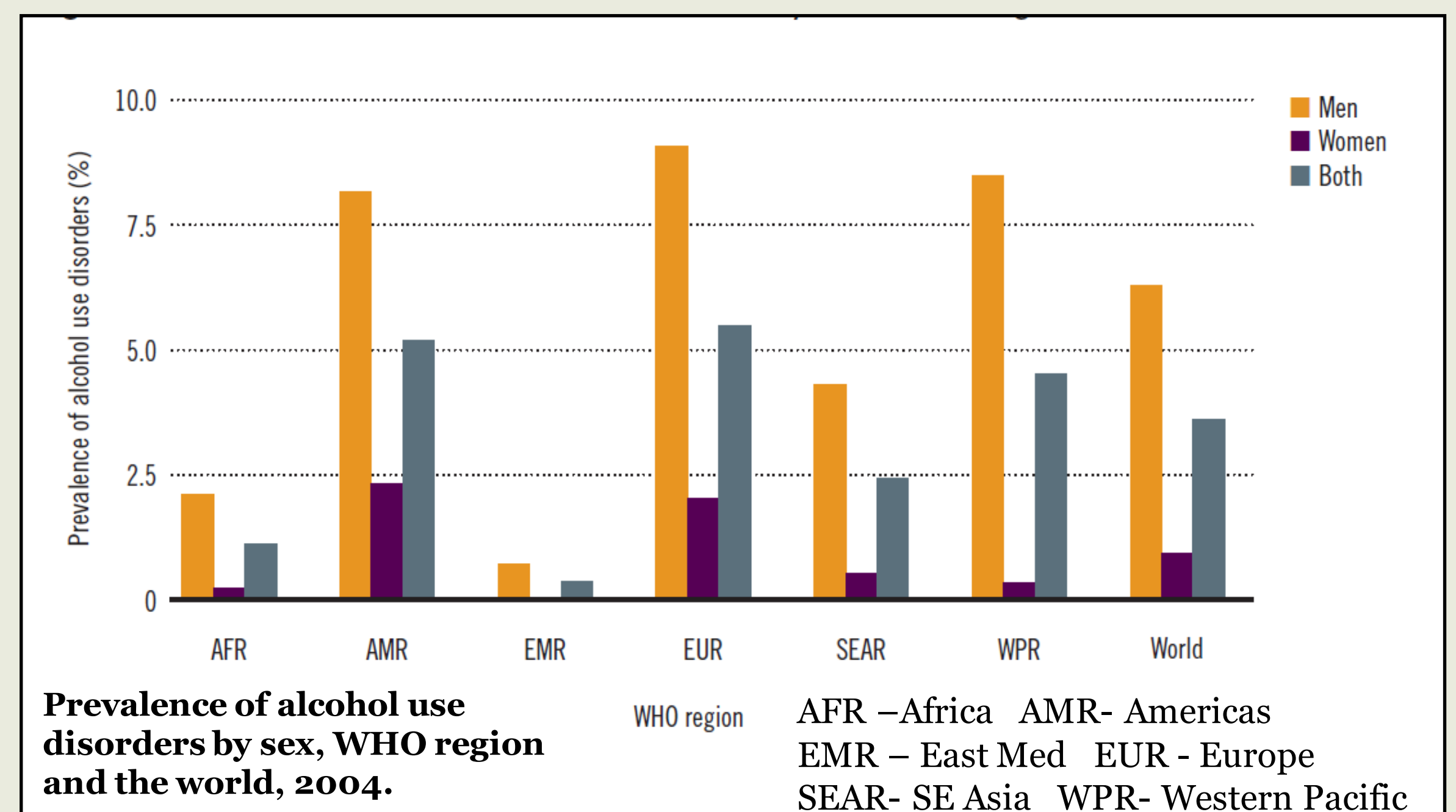
- ❖ Consumption remains comparatively lower than the developed world but is rising in resource poor settings.⁽¹⁾
- ❖ A large proportion of consumption (28.6%) in resource poor environments being homemade, produced illegally or sold outside of normal governmental controls.⁽²⁾



- ❖ The alcohol consumption rates of early economic development can worsen despite a shift to formal alcohol production. A review by Riley and Marshall suggested this shift can lead to more sustained drinking patterns within the population.⁽¹⁾

Morbidity and Mortality

- ❖ 4% of deaths worldwide are attributable to alcohol, greater than mortality from HIV/AIDS, violence or tuberculosis.⁽²⁾
- ❖ A study by Chagas *et al.* (2005)⁽⁷⁾ in Goa demonstrated that 20% of 1013 industrial workers were deemed hazardous drinkers and significantly more likely to have anxiety and depression.
- ❖ It has also been suggested that spousal alcohol misuse is a major risk factor for female depression.⁽⁵⁾



- ❖ The prevalence of alcohol use disorders (dependence and psychoses) is highest amongst men worldwide.⁽²⁾
- ❖ Regions with high abstention rates and therefore low average alcohol intake per capita also have the highest consumption per drinker.⁽²⁾

Poverty

- ❖ Alcohol is an important factor in maintaining and worsening economic difficulty and generating poverty too.⁽⁴⁾
- ❖ Samarasinghe (2009) suggests that consumption is driven strongly by ritual and symbolic pressure, not just the desire for intoxication, keeping poor people collectively poor.⁽⁴⁾

Public policy and alcohol misuse

- ❖ The overall global direction of policy is crystallised in the World Health Organisation's 2011 "Global strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol".
- ❖ This preventative rather than prohibitive policy has generally had three strands; attitude change, health education and beverage availability.
- ❖ There is a pragmatic acknowledgement that the alcohol industry is an important part of the global economy

CONCLUSIONS:

- ❖ Alcohol is increasingly being identified as a health-challenge that is part of a wider epidemiological shift to a non-communicative disease burden in resource poor settings.⁽³⁾
- ❖ Alcohol misuse is fuelled by poverty and contributing to poverty. It compounds this cycle by limiting economic development.
- ❖ Governmental policy remains conflicted due to the alcohol industry's role in developing economies.

References:

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