



EVIDENCE SYNTHESIS
IRELAND



Cochrane
Ireland

Evidence Synthesis Ireland Fellowship Scheme

Review Identification Form

Review Centre and Mentor

Cillian McDowell, Senior HTA Analyst, Health Information and Quality Authority.

Review title

Associations between alcohol consumption and mental health: a systematic review

Review type and methods

Systematic review of observational studies.

Review information

The Department of Health is currently updating the Irish low risk drinking guidelines. They have requested that HIQA undertake this review of associations between alcohol consumption and mental health to inform this update.

Review details

In August 2022, a systematic review of the evidence for the association between alcohol consumption and mental health outcomes was published to support the update of the Canadian low risk drinking guidelines (Cochrane Canada, 2022). This review addressed the association of patterns and levels of alcohol consumption with anxiety, depression and suicidal ideation in studies and documents published up to December 2021. They concluded that there is:

- High certainty evidence that there is no association between the quantity of alcohol intake and the development of depression in adults after four to 10 years,
- Moderate-certainty evidence that there is no association between the frequency of alcohol consumption and the development of depression in adults after four to 10 years,
- In adolescents, it is also likely that higher levels or greater frequency of alcohol consumption, including heavy episodic or binge drinking, is not associated with the onset of depression (moderate-certainty evidence).

However, there were a number of limitations in the evidence, including few longitudinal studies that assessed associations between alcohol consumption and anxiety and suicidal ideation.

Therefore, our review will build on this prior work by Cochrane Canada to include the latest evidence on associations between alcohol consumption and mental health outcomes.

The exact scope and methods for the current review are to be agreed. However, it is expected that the review will:

- Update the Cochrane Canada review to examine the association of alcohol consumption with the development of depression, anxiety and suicidal ideation in longitudinal studies;
- Include cross-sectional studies if no information is available from longitudinal studies;
- Expand the Canadian review to also examine mendelian randomisation studies;
- When possible, separate the evidence by subgroups for age (adolescents, young adults, adults and older adults) and for sex.

References

Cochrane Canada. (2022). Update of a systematic review of the effect of alcohol consumption on the development of depression, anxiety and suicidal ideation. Ottawa, Ont.: Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction

Review current status

This review has not yet started.

Any specific/desirable requirements for fellow (e.g. clinical expertise, methodological expertise)

Experience working with systematic reviews and epidemiological studies would be desirable, though not essential. Additionally, to ensure that the fellow obtains experience of all aspects of the review and enable meetings with the review team, it would be important to be able to dedicate 8 hours per week, over one or two days and within working hours, to the project.

Estimated start and completion dates*

It is anticipated that this review will take 6 months, starting in January 2025 and finishing in June 2025.