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- Alcohol-related brain damage cases hit new high

10 Jul 2018



The number of people being admitted to hospital with brain damage caused by alcohol has hit a new high, official figures have confirmed.

Nearly two people a day are seen by medics after excessive drinking impacted memory, learning and other cognitive skills.

The figures were released following a parliamentary question by shadow health secretary Miles Briggs.

They showed there were 661 cases last year, an increase of 25 from 2015/16.

When the SNP government came to power in 2007, there were 590 instances.

The statistics are the latest indication of Scotland's "complex and deep-rooted" battle with alcohol.

Alcohol is blamed for killing 22 Scots a week, with those in deprived areas considerably more likely to die than wealthier counterparts.

Today's figures show NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde had the most admissions last year, with 230 people requiring treatment for alcohol-related brain damage.

NHS Lothian recorded the second-highest rate with 99, followed by NHS Lanarkshire with 84.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

"These are the latest figures which expose Scotland's complex and deep-rooted relationship with alcohol.

"It's worrying that these statistics continue to rise, and means more people are having their lives badly impacted by drinking too much alcohol.

"Scotland already has one of the worst records in Europe for alcohol consumption, and despite increased awareness, the problem only seems to be getting worse.

"The SNP government has finally managed to introduce minimum pricing, but

it's clear far more will be required if we are to make any meaningful difference.

"The SNP has been in power since 2007, and in that time more people have been admitted to hospital with this problem.

"Health is an entirely devolved issue, and therefore we need to see ministers taking full responsibility for this worsening situation.

"The decision by SNP ministers to cut funding for alcohol and drug partnerships was wrong and has clearly impacted on the delivery of services to support people addicted to alcohol.

"The Scottish Conservatives want to see more emphasis put on recovery programmes, for pilot projects to be brought forward to investigate new and innovative treatments, and for more support for the family members and communities trying to help out vulnerable individuals with alcohol dependency."

Notes to editors:

Below is a full copy of the parliamentary question from Miles Briggs, and the answer from Joe Fitzpatrick:

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Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Scottish Conservatives and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government how many people in each NHS board area in each year since 2007 have been treated for alcohol-related brain damage, and what its position is on the trend.

S5W-17441

Joe FitzPatrick: Excessive drinking over a period of years may lead to a condition known as alcohol-related brain damage. This condition can cause problems with memory, learning and other cognitive skills. The Scottish Government provides funding to NHS Boards to work with Integration Authorities to provide services that meet the health needs of the local population, including people with alcohol-related brain injury. We expect alcohol services, mental health services and social services to work jointly and in a holistic way, so that people with alcohol-related brain injury receive the help they need to recover and any underlying mental health issues are addressed.

In financial year 2016-17 there were 661 Scottish residents who had at least one admission to a general acute hospital with a diagnosis of alcohol-related brain damage. See following table for breakdown of numbers at NHS Board level across financial years 2007-08 to 2016-17.

Table: Number of people with at least one hospital admission with diagnosis of alcohol-related brain damage;

2007-08 – 2016-17

| | 2007-08 | 2008-09 | 2009-10 | 2010-11 | 2011-12 | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 |
|-------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Scotland | 590 | 563 | 579 | 653 | 620 | 613 | 599 | 649 | 636 | 661 |
| NHS Ayrshire & Arran | 44 | 43 | 53 | 40 | 55 | 45 | 44 | 50 | 41 | 37 |
| NHS Borders | 6 | 10 | 8 | * | 7 | 11 | * | * | 6 | * |
| NHS Dumfries & Galloway | 13 | 8 | 8 | 13 | 8 | 7 | 10 | 14 | 9 | 10 |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| NHS Fife | 33 | 22 | 27 | 28 | 31 | 27 | 26 | 32 | 33 | 38 |
| NHS Forth Valley | 17 | 21 | 24 | 22 | 27 | 24 | 34 | 36 | 35 | 35 |
| NHS Grampian | 39 | 38 | 37 | 37 | 34 | 30 | 33 | 34 | 23 | 31 |
| NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde | 189 | 205 | 219 | 262 | 227 | 202 | 208 | 218 | 224 | 230 |
| NHS Highland | 61 | 37 | 42 | 38 | 33 | 54 | 44 | 36 | 48 | 41 |
| NHS Lanarkshire | 64 | 62 | 60 | 83 | 77 | 88 | 76 | 96 | 78 | 84 |
| NHS Lothian | 75 | 80 | 62 | 73 | 75 | 84 | 71 | 80 | 96 | 99 |
| NHS Orkney | * | * | * | * | 0 | * | * | * | * | * |
| NHS Shetland | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | 0 |
| NHS Tayside | 41 | 32 | 30 | 45 | 42 | 34 | 45 | 46 | 34 | 39 |
| NHS Western Isles | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | 0 | * | 7 |

Source: ISD Scotland

* Statistical Disclosure Control has been applied to protect patient confidentiality.