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Use of Alcohol Surrogates by Alcohol Dependent Patients

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Introduction: The problem of the consumption of alcohol surrogates in the former Soviet republics has attracted the attention of researchers after the epidemic of poisonings by surrogate alcohols, which swept across Russia and Belarus in 2006. Isolated studies suggest that the main consumers of noncommercial alcohol are heavy drinkers and alcohol dependent individuals. **Objectives:** This study was design to explore the prevalence, drinking pattern, types, reasons and correlates of the consumption of alcohol surrogates among alcohol dependent patients. **Methods:** The study was conducted in the Belarusian city Grodno in 2013 with 326 alcohol dependent patients (223 men and 103 women) admitted to narcological clinic using structured interviews. **Results:** The results suggest that 52.9% of men and 30.3% of women regularly consume samogon (moonshine), while 11.8% of men and 10.8% of women use surrogates, the most popular among which are medications with a high percentage of ethanol and industrial spirits. The belief that, according to quality criteria, samogon exceeds licensed vodka is the main motive for its consumption. **Conclusions:** This is the first in-depth study of the alcohol surrogates drinking pattern, types, reasons and correlates among alcohol dependent patients in Belarus. The results from present study confirm that the use of alcohol surrogates is common among alcohol dependent patients even though its use may have been underreported. These findings emphasize the urgency of implementing comprehensive alcohol policy, which need to address overall consumption, harmful drinking pattern and taking into account the consumption of alcohol from illicit sources.