

Comment on the "The Pandemic Within the Pandemic: Unprecedented Rise in Alcohol-related Hepatitis During the COVID-19 Pandemic"

To the Editor:

We read with great interest the article by Sohal et al.¹ It mentioned that the number of patients requiring hospitalization for severe alcohol-related hepatitis had risen sharply during the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. We strongly agreed with this opinion. As reported in many articles, alcohol-related digestive diseases were raised since alcohol consumption patterns were changed during the COVID-19 pandemic.²⁻⁵

There are several reasons for this phenomenon. Firstly, COVID-19 pandemic lockdown and restrictions had caused tremendous disruptions for people. Many people had to stay-at-home because a lot of industries were shuttered or stay-at-home orders, which causing social isolation, loss of nonalcohol activities.^{2-4,6} Especially for

young people, the alcohol increases may be attributed to college campus closures, transitions to purely online education, lack of communication with peers.¹ Secondly, COVID-19 led to the economic dislocation, many people's incomes reduced or even lost jobs while prices rise, which caused financial worry. A survey found that African American suffered higher rates of alcohol-related digestive diseases during the pandemic. Possible causes included lack of a secure environment, job loss, increased poverty, lower education, and health literacy.⁵ Thirdly, women had more psychological stress and a higher likelihood of developing alcoholic liver disease.^{3,5} Fourthly, COVID-19 led to a global disruption in medical systems. Many people delayed seeking medical care due to the fear of infecting COVID-19 in medical visiting.¹ Medical workers were reallocated since the number of COVID-19 patients rising, many hospitals were already beyond capacity to offer same per-pandemic services and care, such as face-to-face consultation, alcohol-cessation counseling, which might increase alcohol intake reasonably.

COVID-19 has influenced both physical health and mental health, and alcohol-related digestive diseases has had imposed burden on the capacity and cost of strained health care system.^{1,3,5} It is important for the healthcare to raise attention and awareness to the growing pandemic of alcohol use disorder, and increase

health education and prevention for alcohol-related digestive diseases.

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