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AN AUDIT TO EVALUATE THE USE OF THE ALCOHOL FAST SCREENING TOOL IN ACUTE MEDICAL ADMISSIONS IN A DISTRICT GENERAL HOSPITAL

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Introduction 25% of the UK adult population drink hazardous amounts of alcohol and 30% of male admissions and 15% of female admissions are alcohol related. Similar rates are reported in psychiatric settings demonstrating the significant burden of alcohol within the NHS. Problem drinking is often unrecognised by doctors. The 2011 NICE 'Alcohol Use Disorders' guidelines recommend screening for harmful drinking and alcohol dependence to identify patients in need of intervention.

Aims/Background Our aim was to identify compliance with the alcohol FAST screening tool on admission in all acute adult medical admissions. The FAST tool was developed from AUDIT as a shorter version for hospital environments to detect hazardous drinking. If testing positive, patients will then be referred for brief intervention.

Method A retrospective review of 74 (23 male, 51 female) patient records from December 2012 to February 2013.

Results The FAST tool was completed in 37.8% of cases and missed in 62.2% of patients. When used, the tool was completed correctly in 100% of cases. In the 28/74 cases the FAST tool was utilised, 4(14.3%) patients were drinking over the national recommended limit.

Conclusion Despite the high prevalence of problem drinking and its impact on health, doctors fail to utilise the screening tool in identifying harmful drinking despite its ease in completion as proven by its accurate use each time. This results in missed referrals for interventions to help prevent alcohol related illness and manage alcohol dependence. Improved staff awareness and education is essential to minimise the harmful consequences of alcohol and reduce hospital admissions.