Written Question

Sarah Wollaston (Totnes, Conservative)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence his Department holds on the effects on health of alcohol consumption; and what estimate he has made of the number of deaths from cancer in which alcohol was a contributing factor in the last 12 months.

Anne Milton (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Public Health) Health)

The Department reviewed the evidence on the known health effects of alcohol for its 1995 report 'Sensible Drinking'. A copy has been placed in the Library. Effects on health were also summarised in 'Dangerousness of Drugs' (National Addiction Centre, 2001 updated 2003) that was commissioned by the Department. The updated 2003 report has been placed in the Library.


The Department commissioned the North West Public Health Observatory to provide a detailed analysis of the impact of alcohol use on mortality and hospital admission in its June 2008 report 'Alcohol-attributable fractions for England: Alcohol-attributable mortality and hospital admissions'. A copy of which has already been placed in the Library.

The Department has also analysed the key international research - particularly the extensive reviews on the effects of alcohol on health published by Corrao (Corrao et al 1999. Exploring the dose-response relationship between alcohol consumption and the risk of several alcohol-related conditions: a meta analysis. 'Addiction'94, 1551-1573.) and by Rehm (Rehm et al.2004. In WHO (ed). 'Comparative quantification of health risks: Global and regional burden of disease due to selected major risk factors'. Geneva: WHO); and it has drawn on other published research and reports and on the advice of established experts.

The number of deaths in England from cancer in which alcohol was a contributing factor in 2005, the latest year for which data are readily available is 3,163.

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