

The Alliance

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Press Briefing on 29 January 2021

The HKAAAA attended a press briefing organised by the Hong Kong Medical Journal (HKMJ) on 29 January 2021 to announce the launching of HKAAAA's position statement as an editorial in the February issue of HKMJ. The position statement was prepared and submitted in response to WHO's consultation exercise to develop a working document for the development of a global action plan to reduce alcohol-related harm. At the press briefing, HKAAAA shared overseas and local figures relating to alcohol use during COVID-19 and cautioned about recent increase in drinking prevalence among female students over that of male students. Opportunity was taken to dispel myths that alcohol protects against COVID and advise members of the public that alcohol produces no health benefit whatsoever. On the contrary, alcohol is causally related to 200 diseases and injury conditions, and impacts on the self, family, workforce and society.

The HKAAAA advises that non-drinkers do not start drinking alcohol; that drinkers reduce or abstain from drinking alcohol; and that young people are protected from commercial marketing, adult coercion, and social pressure to drink alcohol.

The HKAAAA calls for action in a number of areas. First, the government, healthcare providers, and non-government organisations should step up efforts to educate the public on alcohol-related harm, particularly for the sake of children and young adults who are most at risk. Second, children and young adults, in particular, should be better protected from alcohol and its harmful effect. The HKAAAA supports implementing the SAFER initiative, as recommended by the WHO. This initiative proposes three most cost-effective methods for curbing alcohol-related harm: reducing alcohol affordability, reducing physical availability of alcohol, and restricting all forms of alcohol marketing. Moreover, the HKAAAA considers WHO should take concrete steps to formulate a global law modelled on the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control to regulate the distribution, sale and marketing of alcohol.

The press briefing was widely covered in 14 news reports on 1 February 2021.

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