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Alcohol consumption and liver cirrhosis mortality: An empirical analysis using aggregate data for 16 European countries

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Abstract:

Since the 1960s wine consumption has decreased dramatically in especially the Southern European countries whereas the countries in the northern parts of Europe have experienced a substitution from beer and spirits toward wines. In this sense there has been a process of convergence taking place regarding per capita consumption of wine among the European countries. Also for the total consumption of alcohol, i.e. the per capita consumption of beer, wine and spirits, the hypothesis of convergence seems to hold.

In the same time span the number of alcohol related diseases as e.g. liver diseases, have changed significantly in the same direction as the developments in alcohol consumption. The changes in the consumption levels of alcohol in general -- and wine in particular -- are influenced by many factors of which health arguments may have played a crucial role. The alcohol policies of the European countries have become more restrictive during the last decades.

Using data on alcohol consumption, alcohol related diseases and alcohol policies of 16 European countries we discuss the questions of whether the intake of alcohol is associated with (liver) diseases. Our empirical analysis provides us with strong evidence of a significantly positive relationship between alcohol consumption and the development in liver diseases; this is in accordance with many other micro studies.

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