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Russian Federation: Alcoholism

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ALCOHOLISM IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

PUBLIC HEALTH BRIEF

HANNAH VERCELLOTTI

ABOUT THE NATION

Pictured below, the Russian Federation (Russia) is located in Europe, and covers 17 million sq. km, making it the largest nation in the world (CIA, 2017). It is so big that the country shares land borders with 14 countries, such as China, and Poland, and its coastline is along the Arctic Ocean, Pacific Ocean, and multiple seas (CIA, 2017).



(CIA, 2017)

QUICK FACTS (CIA, 2017)

Population	142, 257, 519
Top three known ethnic groups	77.7% Russian, 3.7% Tatar, 1.4% Bashkir
Language	Russian
Religions	Russian Orthodox, Muslim, Christian
Type of government	Semi-presidential federation

POLITICAL STRUCTURE

Governments adhering to a semi-presidential federation system consist of a president, who is voted into office by the population, and prime minister and cabinet, who are named by the president. The president is elected in a two-round system that takes place every six years, and he or she can only

hold office twice. Currently, the president of Russia is Vladimir Putin and the prime minister is Dmitry Medvedev (CIA, 2017)

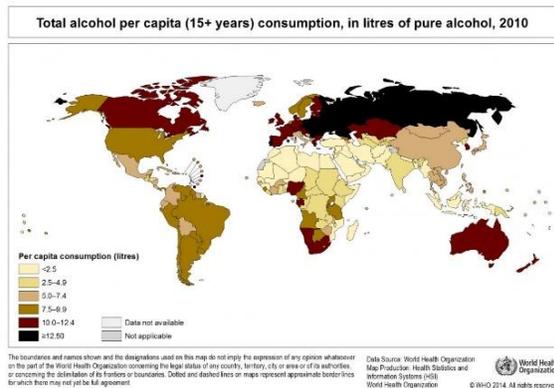
MAJOR CHALLENGES FACED BY THE NATION

Today, Russia is faced with numerous internal and external challenges. Foremost, Russia has one of the world's highest death rates and lowest birth rates among developed nations (Danton, 2007, p. 42). This may be due to their switch to a market-based healthcare system where one's income level determines care. Furthermore, the leading cause of death in Russia is coronary heart disease which is largely affected by excessive alcohol use (Danton, 2007, p. 42). Furthermore, many of Russia's institutions, such as healthcare and law enforcement, are believed to be corrupt. This corruption can carry over into external challenges, especially with the United States. These two highly-advanced countries are generally skeptical of one another and compete for the most technological advancements.

ABOUT THE PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM

Alcoholism and excessive alcohol use is a major public health problem in Russia, and has been around for at least a century. According to the figure below, Russians consume alcohol more than the vast majority of other countries. This high consumption and alcoholism has led to the country's high death rate. In fact, Zaridze et al. (2014) found that vodka and other strong alcoholic beverages are considered a major cause of death in Russia (p. 1471). In addition to

these direct mortalities, alcoholism leads to Russia's leading cause of death, coronary heart disease, and many other harmful outcomes including road-traffic accidents, liver diseases, alcohol poisoning, cancer, and depression (CDC, 2017)



(WHO, 2014, p. 29)

BASIC EPIDEMIOLOGY

Alcoholism and excessive alcohol use is very common in the population. However, while men and women both engage in alcohol use, Russian men older than 15 years of age are most at risk for alcoholism and alcohol use (WHO, 2014, p. 233). This group was chosen since 29.8% of males are heavy drinkers compared to only 10.3% of women, and 31% of males have an alcohol use disorder compared to only 6.2% of women (WHO, 2014, p. 233).

PREVIOUS INTERVENTIONS

Excessive alcohol use and alcoholism are respectively identified by a dependence on alcohol. Most people analyzing alcoholism gather data on these conditions via published morbidity and mortality rates as well as conducting longitudinal studies. In 2008, Stickley, Razvodovsky, and McKee concluded that in the past, Russia's alcohol-related policies included a state monopoly

on alcohol sales and a period of prohibition (p. 20). The prohibition did little to alcoholism; instead of going away, the problem worsened with illegal alcohol sales activity (Stickley et. al., 2008, p. 20).

FUTURE INTERVENTIONS

Future interventions must consider two things: the ineffectiveness of past prohibition and the exclusive market-based healthcare system. To address both of these points, I propose that Russia should implement a better high-school education program related to the safe, responsible use of alcohol. Since prohibition was ineffective in the past and many Russians cannot currently afford healthcare, interventions must start early and be nationwide. Through an education program, Russia can prepare their younger citizens to lead a healthier lifestyle, and hopefully reduce the high levels of alcoholism in the country.

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