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**ISSUED ON BEHALF OF THE BRITISH SOCIETY OF GASTROENTEROLOGY**

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**TALKING TREATMENTS 'CUT ALCOHOL INTAKE BY A QUARTER'**

Simple advice and brief interventions - 'talking treatments' - could reduce the amount of alcohol individuals consume to low risk levels, the British Society of Gastroenterology's Annual Scientific Meeting heard today. The effect could be to cut consumption by up to a quarter.

But most areas of the NHS are currently failing to offer these simple, cheap treatments, and they are particularly scarce where they can do most good - in GP surgeries and health centres.

Dr Gilvarry said: "Brief interventions are effective in many people, especially those who drink in a hazardous way and who are not typically seeking help for their alcohol problem. It can reduce the amount consumed significantly, and may reduce the harm associated with alcohol misuse."

Simple advice and more detailed, structured treatment does not take much time and can be delivered by general practitioners, nurses, social workers and others, particularly in primary care and accident & emergency departments.

"There could be a reduction of up to 25% overall, which in public health terms could have a significant effect. The problem is, there is a big gap between the evidence that these interventions work and what happens in practice."

She said that there are few places where brief interventions are being implemented in a structured and routine way. Brief interventions can be effective when used opportunistically - for example, when a patient presents with an alcohol related accident like a broken bone.

She urged GPs and hospital professionals to consider screening for hazardous alcohol consumption and related problems, and to deliver brief structured advice on reduction. This would require resources to implement routinely.

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