Abstract

Mass health examinations carried out in Busselton in November and December, 1972, revealed that drinking and smoking were more prevalent amongst men, whereas more women took analgesic drugs. Compared with older age groups more young people consumed alcohol, tobacco and analgesics. Younger people are also taking up smoking and drinking at earlier ages than the older age groups. These findings stress the need for better health education to alter the attitudes of younger people. The people of Busselton would support legislation to allow spot breathalyser tests for drivers, women (70%) providing stronger support than men (57%). This suggests that public opinion could support continuing legislation to combat road accidents. Comparisons between the North Shore, Sydney, and Busselton populations indicated somewhat higher proportions of the urban people were consuming alcohol, tobacco and analgesics, particularly urban women. However, both Australian samples revealed disturbingly high proportions of subjects taking excessive monthly quantities of analgesics (3% to 5%) compared with the United Kingdom (2-8%). Previous reports of the high proportion of Traralgon people taking drugs or medication is supported by the Busselton data, which suggest the Australia requires stricter statutory control of analgesics, compulsory warnings on labels and restriction of sales to pharmacists.