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Impact of beverages consumption on nocturnal leg cramps in patients over 60 years old

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Background and Aim: Nocturnal Leg Cramps (NLC) are affecting almost one in two people over 60. Those spontaneous painful muscular contractions, unrelated to physical exertion, resulting quality of life alteration. Little information exists on the impact of beverage consumption on NLC. Our aim was then to evaluate if coffee or alcoholic beverage had an impact on NLC.

Method: Case-control study including patients over 60 consulting their Family Doctor. Matching was made on age, sex, medical history and medications known to trigger cramps. The consumption of each food was evaluated through the auto-questionnaire Institut Gustave Roussy, used in the E3N study, the French component of the European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition study. The subjects had one month to fill in the questionnaire, in which pictures were used to evaluate the volume of liquid consumed. Statistical analysis was made under Bayesian paradigm.

Results: We were able to collect a full workable questionnaire for 73 matched pairs. We observed a statistical link between the global consumption of alcoholic beverage and NLC (OR=6,5; IC 95%=[1,68; 35,80]; probability =99,78%). No links were identified between the total volume of liquid consumed, and cramps, nor between the consumption of coffee or specific alcoholic beverage like white wine.

Conclusion: Our study shows a potential link between alcoholic beverage consumption and NLC. Our results need to be confirmed by a cohort study in order to prove causality. Cramp reduction is a new argument to use to prevent alcohol misuse among Family Doctors' patients.