Abstract

Objective. To present an ethnographic description of the treatment of patients with excessive alcohol consumption in an emergency room, how they are evaluated by doctors, and the various contextual aspects surrounding this condition. Materials and Methods. The ethnographic work was carried out over a period of two months, with researchers working 24 hours a day, seven days a week from January 9 to March 15, 2002 in the emergency room (ER) at General Hospital, Mexico City. Results. Patients that had consumed alcohol and were admitted to the ER had to wait longer than others to be treated for their intoxication to wear off and for their sometimes aggressive attitude to become calm. The rejection of the alcoholized patients was expressed through scolding to persuade alcohol-dependent patients or those that abused alcohol to reduce their consumption. Conclusion. The theoretical and methodological approach of the ethnographic observation enables reflection on the social and cultural mechanisms related to this health problem.

Keywords

Ethnography, emergency service, hospital, alcohol consumption.