Abstract
Despite the availability of data about drinking frequency and patterns, the surveys on alcohol use among adolescents carried out in Europe tend not to provide information about diagnostic criteria for alcohol use disorders (AUD) or estimation of their prevalence. This study assesses the prevalence of AUD among a sample of Spanish adolescents, to identify the most prevalent symptoms, and explore gender differences in AUD in this population. The final sample consisted of 504 participants aged 15 to 18, obtained by means of random sampling from all the schools in the region of Asturias (Spain). The presence of alcohol abuse (AA) and alcohol dependence (AD) disorders was evaluated according to DSM-IV-TR criteria. The results showed that 12.5% of the sample met the criteria for the diagnosis of AUD (6.7% for alcohol abuse, AA, and 5.8% for alcohol dependence, AD). The most prevalent symptoms were having social problems for AA diagnosis (9% of students who reported alcohol use in the past year) and tolerance for AD diagnosis (45.8% of students who reported alcohol use in the past year). Males showed a significantly higher score than females in AUD, AA and two AA diagnosis criteria (hazardous use and legal problems). The prevalence of AUD among Spanish adolescents is very high, males being more likely than females to endorse criteria for AUD and AA, though not for AD. These findings reveal a serious health issue and highlight the need to develop preventive efforts and provide coordinated alcohol-abuse interventions.

Keywords
Adolescents, alcohol use disorders, alcohol abuse, alcohol dependence, gender differences.