Doctors need greater understanding of alcohol units and calories

The addition of information regarding calorific content to alcohol packaging should afford the consumer greater awareness of the content, facilitate informed choice and hopefully promote appropriate behavioural change. Should the provision of such information become mandated it would be interesting to explore how consumer choice and drinking behaviours may be moderated.

Those in clinical practice should, as a matter of routine, ask questions about alcohol use in addition to diet and exercise, and from this the additional calories can be estimated (1 UK unit of alcohol contains 56 kcal), however the nature of the drink itself will add to the overall calorie counts (a 50ml measure of cream liqueur contains just under 1 unit of alcohol, but 121 kcal). Given that almost one in five junior doctors remain unaware of what a unit of alcohol actually is (1;2) there is a clear need to raise address these issues as part of the undergraduate medical school curriculum.
