Hands up if you've had a month off alcohol, also known as Dry January? Well done if you made it. I did not, but then even though I am Chair of the cross-party Parliamentary group on alcohol misuse, I didn't try. I didn't do it last year either when my poor staff attempted it with varying success. So I am definitely not going to be using this column to tut at those who failed!

That said I do worry about alcohol consumption in the UK, particularly in the professional and retired classes. Evidence shows that older people are drinking more than ever and so are working women. While people might not be drinking to unconsciousness, which is what our media tends to focus on with pictures of young binge drinkers, we are seeing a rise in liver disease due to an increase in the amount some people are drinking.

So what can we do about it? There is an issue of people being not aware of the harm they are doing to their bodies but the problem is that often alcohol related conditions are as a result of a cumulative level of hazardous drinking. That is why Dry January has become higher profile over the years. Not only does it give the liver a much needed break, helps us lose weight, saves quite a bit of money, but it also changes a habit. Many of us go home, pour a glass of wine for dinner and then perhaps another after. Before we know it we've busted through the ceiling of recommended limits per week.

All health professionals know the dangers of the increasing amount that some people are drinking; they see it in their surgeries and A&E departments. The question is what should politicians do about it. It is an unanswered question and one that continues to vex the brightest people in Whitehall, not just in January but all year round.