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www.aim-digest.com  www.drinkingandyou.com
Argentina

A government ban on alcohol advertising in Argentina has caused controversy among drinks producers, radio and television channels and the authorities. The bill was approved in 1997 but was only made effective in May 2009. As it was approved, the bill banned all forms of alcohol advertising targeting children. However, the version that was made effective interprets this as all adverts broadcast between 6am and 10pm.

In addition, companies must refrain from using celebrities to advertise alcohol and the advertising of alcohol at football matches will be banned. Companies are asking the government for more clarity due to the differences between the bill and the version finally enacted.

France

The French National Academy of Medicine proposes that people should regularly abstain from alcohol for 4 hours in order to determine whether they are drinking too much. If there is no change in their behaviour and they don’t feel like they are missing something, they do not need to change their drinking habits. If not, they are likely to be dependent on alcohol. The Academy says that 37% of people between 18 and 74 years old drink too much alcohol in France.

The French Interior Minister is expected to propose stricter sanctions against drivers who commit offences. These will include: confiscating the vehicles of those who drive without a licence, repeatedly exceeding speed restrictions, refuse to take alcohol and drug tests or repeatedly cause serious accidents. Compulsory in-car breathalysers or ‘alco-locks will be implemented for those found to drink and drive.

Croatia

According to the newly adopted Law on Excise Charges, taxes on non-alcoholic beer products will be abolished. The new law has been adopted in accordance with the EU standards and will include abolishment of taxes for products with up to 1.2% abv. In addition, taxes will be removed for production of wine for own uses.

Albania

In Albania, the Public Health Institute (PHI) has warned of an increase in the number of young people that consume alcohol, despite the regulation that bans sale of alcoholic drinks to those under 18 years old. PHI statistics show that 40% of adults in Albania consume alcohol daily and 7% are drinking excessively.
Effects of alcohol on atrial fibrillation: Myths and truths

Professor R Curtis Ellison provides a summary and comments on a study by CEB Balbao et al. on the effects of alcohol on atrial fibrillation, published in the Journal 'Therapeutic Advances in Cardiovascular Disease'.

The authors state that both acute and chronic alcohol use have been associated with cardiac arrhythmias, in particular atrial fibrillation, or so-called ‘holiday heart syndrome’. However, most epidemiological, clinical and experimental studies attempting to elucidate the mechanisms involved have been inconclusive. This paper reviews the literature and describes an animal experiment testing large does of alcohol in producing atrial fibrillation.

The authors list the possible mechanisms by which either long-term or acute alcohol use could cause cardiac arrhythmias, shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Long term consumption</th>
<th>Acute intoxication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct effects unlikely</td>
<td>Direct effects unlikely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factors facilitating reentry</td>
<td>Factors facilitating focal activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Myocardial fibrosis</td>
<td>- Catecholamine release</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Myocardial dilation</td>
<td>- Metabolic acidosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Associated structural heart diseases</td>
<td>- Sleep apnoea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Metabolic disturbances</td>
<td>- Electrolyte disturbances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Increased sympathetic tone</td>
<td>- Increased oxidative stress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The authors then present a table summarising available data on the association between alcohol and atrial fibrillation in different types of studies. It is clear that there is no unanimity in findings.

In addition, the authors of this paper describe an experiment that they carried out in anesthetized dogs to which large does of alcohol were administered. With very high levels of alcohol, there was a decrease in the left ventricular ejection fraction, but no atrial or ventricular arrhythmias were produced and electrophysiological studies did not show abnormalities. Further, histological and ultrastructural analysis was normal in all specimens studied.

The authors conclude that acute alcoholic intoxication does not exert direct myocardial actions that may create a substrate for the development of arrhythmias. They state that they are not aware of any other study that has evaluated all of these parameters concurrently, whether experimentally or clinically.

These results support other studies that suggest that alcohol intake, especially moderate consumption, is not an important factor in the development of atrial fibrillation. For example, these findings are similar to what Luc Djoussé et al* reported from the Framingham Study several years ago. The animal experiment is consistent with alcohol not being a key factor in the development of most arrhythmias, although the development of atrial fibrillation after acute excessive drinking with intoxication has been substantiated in many reports.


Alcohol in moderation, cardioprotection, and neuroprotection: Epidemiological considerations and mechanistic studies

The authors state that in contrast to many years of important research and clinical attention to the pathological effects of alcohol (ethanol) abuse, the past several decades have seen the publication of a number of peer-reviewed studies indicating the beneficial effects of light-moderate, non-binge consumption of varied alcoholic beverages, as well as experimental demonstrations that moderate alcohol exposure can initiate typically cytoprotective mechanisms. A considerable body of epidemiology associates moderate alcohol consumption with significantly reduced risks of coronary heart disease and, albeit currently a less robust relationship, cerebrovascular (ischemic) stroke. Experimental studies with experimental rodent models and cultures (cardiac myocytes, endothelial cells) indicate that moderate alcohol exposure can promote anti-inflammatory processes involving adenosine receptors, protein kinase C (PKC), nitric oxide synthase, heat shock proteins, and others which could underlie cardioprotection.

Further, brain functional comparisons between older moderate alcohol consumers and nondrinkers have received more recent epidemiological study. In over half of nearly 45 reports since the early 1990s, significantly reduced risks of cognitive loss or dementia in moderate, non-binge consumers of alcohol (wine, beer, liquor) have been observed, whereas increased risk has been seen only in a few studies. Physiological explanations for the apparent CNS benefits of moderate consumption have invoked alcohol's cardiovascular and/or hematological effects, but there is also experimental evidence that moderate alcohol levels can exert direct "neuroprotective" actions—pertinent are several studies in vivo and rat brain organotypic cultures, in which antecedent or preconditioning exposure to moderate alcohol neuroprotects against ischemia, endotoxin, b-amyloid, a toxic protein intimately associated with Alzheimer's, or gp10, the neuroinflammatory HIV-1 envelope protein. The alcohol-dependent neuroprotected state appears linked to activation of signal transduction processes potentially involving reactive oxygen species, several key protein kinases, and increased heat shock proteins. Thus to a certain extent, moderate alcohol exposure appears to trigger analogous mild stress-associated, anti-inflammatory mechanisms in the heart, vasculature, and brain that tend to promote cellular survival pathways.

Professor R Curtis Ellison comments: This is an excellent review of current data on how alcohol consumption is associated with coronary artery disease, stroke, and dementia. It provides brief summaries of epidemiologic studies, but focuses especially on experimental evidence for a variety of mechanisms by which alcohol, as well as resveratrol, relate to disease.

(A) Cardioprotective and molecular targets of alcohol. Cardioprotective targets are shown on the right, whereas the molecular targets are shown on the left. (B) Cardioprotective and molecular targets of resveratrol. Cardioprotective targets are shown on the right, whereas the molecular targets are shown on the left.
The positive and negative health effects of alcohol - and the public health implications

A recent paper by Professor Morten Grønbæk of the Centre for Alcohol Research, National Institute of Public Health, University of Southern Denmark reviews, the negative and the positive effects of alcohol on health. It is first of all established facts that a high alcohol intake implies an increased risk of a large number of health outcomes, such as dementia, breast cancer, colorectal cancer, cirrhosis, upper digestive tract cancer and alcohol dependency. Second, it is justified that alcohol has beneficial effects for some individuals, especially with regard to prevention of thrombosis of the heart. The public health relevance of these results is considered. The sensible drinking limits, used in both the UK and Denmark, of a maximum of 21 drinks per week for men and 14 drinks per week for women seem valid. A broader public health message of the beneficial effects of alcohol does not seem to be of interest in Western societies, where only a very small fraction of the population are non drinkers and may have very good reasons therefore.

Professor R Curtis Ellison comments: This is a very complete summary of the positive and negative health effects of alcohol from a leading scientist in the field. It summarizes the epidemiologic evidence for adverse and protective aspects of alcohol consumption as well as many of the proposed biological mechanisms for such effects. It describes potential confounders of the demonstrated effects of alcohol and concludes with a discussion of how current data on alcohol intake and health can be used in making reasonable recommendations to the public. It includes many of the key references on the topic.


Table 1 Overview of the positive and negative health effects of alcohol

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organ</th>
<th>Amount of alcohol, threshold</th>
<th>Condition/disease</th>
<th>Relative risk</th>
<th>Level of evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CNS</td>
<td>&gt;10 drinks per day</td>
<td>Dementia, atrophy</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNS</td>
<td></td>
<td>Polynuropathy</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNS</td>
<td>&gt;10 drinks per day</td>
<td>Cirrhosis</td>
<td>3-20</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liver</td>
<td>M &gt; 5, W &gt; 3 drinks per day</td>
<td>Pancreatitis</td>
<td>3-20</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pancreas</td>
<td>5-10 drinks per day</td>
<td>Prevention of gall stones</td>
<td>0.5-0.8</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallbladder</td>
<td>1-2 drinks per day</td>
<td>Cancer</td>
<td>3-20</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oesophagus</td>
<td>5-10 drinks per day</td>
<td>Ulcer, gastritis</td>
<td>1.5-2</td>
<td>Sparse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ventricle</td>
<td>5-10 drinks per day</td>
<td>Ulcer</td>
<td>1.5-20</td>
<td>Sparse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duodenum</td>
<td>5-10 drinks per day</td>
<td>Rectal cancer</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colon</td>
<td>5-10 drinks per day</td>
<td>Cancer</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breast</td>
<td>1-2 drinks per day</td>
<td>Amenorrhea</td>
<td>3-20</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reproductive system</td>
<td>&gt;10 drinks per day</td>
<td>Osteoporosis</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bone</td>
<td>5-10 drinks per day</td>
<td>Prevention of thrombosis</td>
<td>0.5-0.8</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart</td>
<td>1-2 drinks per day</td>
<td>Prevention of plaques</td>
<td>0.5-0.8</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardiovascular system</td>
<td>1-2 drinks per day</td>
<td>Prevention of diabetes</td>
<td>0.5-0.8</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muscular/insulin resistance</td>
<td>1-2 drinks per day</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For each organ, the amount necessary to imply a certain condition is noted. The level of effect in magnitudes of relatives risk from a certain intake (>1 means protective effect), and finally a judgement of level of evidence for each relation.
Moderate alcohol consumption may protect against gallstones

Research by the University of East Anglia in the UK has found that consuming two units of alcohol a day cuts the chance of developing gallstones by a third. The research was presented at the Digestive Disease Week annual meeting in Chicago, 29th May– 4th June.

It was already known that alcohol intake has a protective effect against the formation of gallstones, but this new study establishes for the first time the precise quantitative effect of each unit of alcohol on the development of gallstones.

Using questionnaires, investigators measured the dietary habits of 25,639 men and women and followed them for a 10-year period, during which time 267 patients developed gallstones.

Participants in the study provided detailed information on the frequency and quantity of their alcohol intake. Researchers found that those who reported consuming two UK units of alcohol per day had a one-third reduction in their risk of developing gallstones.

Each unit of alcohol consumed per week reduced the chances of gallstones by three per cent.

Researchers emphasised that their findings show the benefits of moderate alcohol intake but stress that excessive alcohol intake can cause health problems. Quantifying how much alcohol reduces the risk of gallstone development allows doctors to offer specific guidance without introducing the risk of excessive alcohol consumption.

“These findings significantly increase our understanding of the development of gallstones,” said Dr Andrew Hart, senior lecturer in gastroenterology at UEA’s School of Medicine, Health Policy and Practice. “Once we examine all the factors related to their development in our study in the UK, including diet, exercise, body weight and alcohol intake, we can develop a precise understanding of what causes gallstones and how to prevent them.”

For more information, visit http://www.ddw.org

Diet, lifestyle, drinking and bowel cancer risk

An analysis of 100 international published studies on the link between major and modifiable risk factors for colorectal cancer including alcohol, smoking, diabetes, physical activity and various dietary components reveals that lifestyle risk factors such as alcohol consumption and cigarette smoking are important risk factors for bowel cancer.

Cancer Research UK epidemiologist Professor Max Parkin has calculated that bowel cancer incidence is on course to jump from the current 36,000 cases a year to almost 46,000 a year by 2024. The study concludes that by modifying lifestyles, the bowel cancer risk can be modified:

‘For men top of the recommended list is to cut back on the amount of red meat on the menu. If all men ate no more than three ounces (80 grams) of red meat a day the number of cases of male bowel cancer would be reduced by 3640 (14%). For women, who eat less red meat than men, there would be a small (3%) reduction of cases - 640 a year by 2024.

Overall, maintaining a healthy weight is key to cutting the levels of disease in men and women. Being overweight or obese increases the risk of bowel cancer.

A drop in the number of people who are overweight could cut the number of cases by 3470 (7.6%). Even stabilising at current levels would cut the predicted number of future cases by 3%.

It is important to eat at least five portions of vegetables and fruit a day which could reduce the number of cases by 2830 (6%).

Keeping alcohol to no more than three units a day for men and two units for women would prevent a further 1680 cases (3.7%).

Regular physical activity – could prevent a further 1150 cases (2.5%).’

Professor Parkin noted that around 19,700 men and just over 16,500 women are diagnosed with bowel cancer each year. As people live longer more people can expect to develop the disease in the future, but people can change their lifestyles to reduce their risk.

Resveratrol study demonstrates significant health benefits

Several resveratrol studies, a polyphenol found in high concentrations in red wine, have indicated therapeutic potential for cancer chemoprevention as well as cardioprotection. Resveratrol may aid in the prevention of age-related disorders, such as neurodegenerative diseases, inflammation, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease.

Studies indicate that low doses of resveratrol improve cell survival as a component of cardio- and neuro-protection, while high doses increase cell death. The benefits of alcohol are all about moderation. Low to moderate drinking appears to reduce all causes of mortality, while too much drinking causes multiple organ damage. A mini-review of recent findings on red wine's polyphenols, will be published in the September issue of Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research; the review is also available at Early View.

“The breadth of benefits is remarkable – cancer prevention, protection of the heart and brain from damage, reducing age-related diseases such as inflammation, reversing diabetes and obesity, and many more,” said Lindsay Brown associate professor in the School of Biomedical Sciences at The University of Queensland and corresponding author for the study. “It has long been a question as to how such a simple compound could have these effects but now the puzzle is becoming clearer with the discovery of the pathways, especially the sirtuins, a family of enzymes that regulate the production of cellular components by the nucleus. ‘Is resveratrol the only compound with these properties?’ This would seem unlikely, with similar effects reported for other components of wine and for other natural products such as curcumin. However, we know much more about resveratrol relative to these other compounds.”

Key points of the review include: Resveratrol exhibits therapeutic potential for cancer chemoprevention as well as cardioprotection.

“It sounds contradictory that a single compound can benefit the heart by preventing damage to cells, yet prevent cancer by causing cell death, said Brown. “The most likely explanation for this, still to be rigorously proved in many organs, is that low concentrations activate survival mechanisms of cells while high concentrations turn on the in-built death signals in these cells.”

Resveratrol may aid in the prevention of age-related disorders, such as neurodegenerative diseases, inflammation, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease.

“The simplest explanation is that resveratrol turns on the cell’s own survival pathways, preventing damage to individual cells,” said Brown. “Further mechanisms help, including removing very reactive oxidants in the body and improving blood supply to cells.”

Low doses of resveratrol improve cell survival as a mechanism of cardio- and neuro-protection, while high doses increase cell death. “The key difference is probably the result of activation of the sirtuins in the nucleus,” said Brown. “Low activation reverses age-associated changes, while high activation increases the process of apoptosis or programmed cell death to remove cellular debris. Similar changes are seen with low-dose versus high-dose resveratrol: low-dose resveratrol produces cellular protection and reduces damage, while high-dose resveratrol prevents cancers.”

In summary, noted Brown, current scientific research is starting to explain reports from the last 200 years that drinking red wine improves health. “We need to understand better the vast array of compounds that exist in nature, and determine their potential benefits to health.”

“There is one particular point that deserves fleshing out,” added Taylor. “Resveratrol is largely inactivated by the gut or liver before it reaches the blood stream, where it exerts its effects – whatever they may be – good, bad, or indifferent. Thus, most of the resveratrol in imbibed red wine does not reach the circulation. Interestingly, absorption via the mucous membranes in the mouth can result in up to around 100 times the blood levels, if done slowly rather than simply gulping it down. Of course, we don’t know if these things matter yet, but issues like this are real and generally ignored by all.”

Source: The Biological Responses to Resveratrol and Other Polyphenols From Alcoholic Beverages. Lindsay Brown, Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research. Published Online: 10 Jun 2009
The adage “an apple a day keeps the doctor away” is still quite popular. The Englishman of the early seventeenth century found that cider raised his spirits, lowered his temperature in fevers and loosened his bowels. He also maintained that under its benign influence he would not contract rheumatism or stone of the bladder, that there was moral but not medical danger in getting drunk upon cider twice a day and that it was a wonderful preservation in old age (1). “Indeed”, Evelyn stated in his book Pomona, “cider is above all the most eminent, soberly to exhilarate the Spirits of us Hypochondrical Islanders” (2).

Recently, many studies have provided the scientific backing for some of the old sayings, however, while extensive research exists, a literature review of the health benefits of ciders has not been compiled, and the purpose of this paper is to review the most recent literature regarding the health benefits of apples and their phytochemicals in general and the benefits of alcoholic ciders in particular.

Apple phytochemicals
There are about 8000 phytochemicals (plant polyphenols) present in whole foods. Plant polyphenols play an important role as antioxidants and are therefore regarded to exhibit protective effects against cardiovascular diseases (3) and cancer (4). Epidemiological studies have linked the consumption of apples with reduced risk of some cancers, cardiovascular disease, asthma, and diabetes. In the laboratory, apples have been found to have very strong antioxidant activity, inhibit cancer cell proliferation, decrease lipid oxidation, and lower cholesterol. Recently apple polyphenols and fibers supplied at nutritional doses were shown to limit the development of atherosclerotic lesions in the aorta of apo-E-deficient mice—an atherosclerosis-prone animal model (5).

The main polyphenol sources are fruits and vegetables; apples account for an important part of the fruit intake and when compared to many other commonly consumed fruits, apples have the second highest level of antioxidant activity. Also beverages like red wine, cider, coffee, green and black tea as well as cocoa contribute to the total daily polyphenol intake (6). Flavanols (catechin and proanthocyanidins) are the major class of apple polyphenols (71-90%), followed by hydroxycinnamates (4-18%), flavonols (1-11%), dihydrochalcones (2-6%), and in red apples anthocyanins (1-3%).

In Western Europe apples provide a clearly important dietary contribution of total polyphenols estimated at 144.8 mg per serving. The mean composition of a single serving of apples contains 121.7 mg of flavanols, 16.2 mg of hydroxycinnamates, 8.9 mg of flavonols, and 4.4 mg of dihydrochalcones while the content in anthocyanins at 1.2 mg is very low (7). Little attention has been given to the absorption and metabolism of polyphenols, however, Susan DuPont and colleagues from Institute of Food Research, Norwich, determined the uptake and excretion of low doses of polyphenols in six subjects who each consumed 1.1 L of an alcoholic cider beverage. The results show that polyphenols from alcoholic apple cider are absorbed and metabolized by humans (8).

Apples, Malus domestica (Rosaceae), may contain up to 2 grams of polyphenols per kilogram wet weight. There are known to be more phenolics in the skins of apples than in the flesh: 142.7 and 97.6 mg flavonoids per 100 g apples (Red Delicious) with and without skin, respectively. The total antioxidant activity of phytochemicals in 1 gram of apples with peels is equivalent to 83.3 µmol vitamin C equivalents—much higher than the antioxidant activity of the normal amount of vitamin C in 1 gram of apples with skin (0.057 mg). In other words, vitamin C in apples contributes only < 0.4% of total antioxidant activity of apples. The antioxidant value of one apple is equivalent to 1500 mg of vitamin C (9).

Dessert versus cider apples
Polyphenols are important secondary metabolites in apples that are involved in essential organoleptic criteria such as colour, bitterness and astringency of cider. Cider apples contain higher levels of phenolics than dessert apples, which gives them their characteristic bitter and astringent flavour (10). Even in cider apples, polyphenol concentrations show a great variability according to the variety. Sylvain Guyot and coworkers compared five French cider apple varieties on the basis of their detailed polyphenol profile in the cortex and in the juices: total polyphenols varied from 1899 to 5065 milligrams per kilograms of fresh apple weight (11). Similar results were found in a HPLC-analysis of 20 apple cultivars comprising 19 English cider apple varieties and one dessert apple variety: the cider varieties contained higher levels than the dessert apple and the peel was richer in phenolics than the flesh. The phenolic concentrations ranged between 230 and 4920 mg/kg fresh weight in the flesh.
and between 546 and 6306 mg/kg fresh weight in the peel (12).

Rosa M. Alonso-Salces and coworkers determined the polyphenolic compositions of 31 Basque cider apple cultivars. Total polyphenols were distributed in a wide concentration range depending on the cultivar from 1.0 g/kg (Bost Kantoi) to 6.0 g/kg of apple (Mendexa 10) with Larrabetzu presenting the richest composition in total polyphenols: 13.6 g/kg of apple. In apple juice, the total polyphenol concentration was around 1-2 g/L of juice with Bost Kantoi in the lower end (0.7 g/L) and Mendexa 10 in the higher end (5.4 g/L) (13). At the University of Würzburg an HPLC-analysis was performed of the polyphenol profiles of juices freshly made from 4 dessert and 7 cider apple cultivars as well as 24 commercially available apple juices. For dessert apples the total polyphenol content ranged from 154-178 mg/L, whereas for “old” German cider apple cultivars 261-970 mg/L were determined. The total polyphenol amounts in commercial apple juices were lower; in clear apple juices ranges varying from 110 to 173 mg/L were found (14).

Cider phenolic compounds
Several studies have shown that ciders can provide a wide range of phenolics to supplement a healthy, well-balanced diet. The Institute of Food Research at Norwich determined the amount of antioxidants in 18 UK ciders by adding some of the cider to a solution containing free radicals and then measuring the amount of free radicals knocked out by the beverage. The antioxidant activity score for ciders ranged between 100 and 2595 units for a 250 ml serving which compares to a 150 ml serving of red Bordeaux (2100-3400 units) and is better than a glass of white wine (220 units) and much better than 150 ml long life apple juice (140 units) (15). Rodríguez Madrera and coworkers from SERIDA performed an HPLC-analysis of 92 Asturian natural ciders and found a range of concentrations of phenolic compounds from 189 to 962 mg/L. The cidemaking process in Asturias is very similar to that used in the Basque Country. Natural cider is produced by milling, followed by traditional pressing (3 days) or pneumatic pressing (6 h), spontaneous clarification, natural fermentation to dryness, and long maturation times (4-10 months); moreover, the addition of sugars and CO2 in this kind of cider is prohibited by the Spanish legislation (16).

Except for an absence of anthocyanins, ciders have been shown to have a similar phenolic profile to that of apples. Ciders produced in England are usually made from more than one variety of apple and are known as blended ciders. The basic method used to produce English ciders involves juice extraction, fermentation, and clarification. Alan Crozier and coworkers quantified phenolic compounds in 23 English apple ciders to find out whether the high levels of phenolics in the cider apples is reflected in the ciders themselves. The effect of the choice of apple can be seen in two of the ciders. Both cider 4 and cider 5 were produced by the same manufacturer using the same method, but there is a massive difference in their phenolic profiles, with cider 5 having a much lower phenolic content of 44 mg/L compared with the 1559 mg/L in cider 4. Both of these ciders are single variety ciders, cider 4 being produced from Somerset Redstreak apples and cider 5 from Cox apples. It has been shown in previous studies than the Somerset Redstreak cider apple is especially rich in phenolics. This indicates that the choice of apples can play a major part in the final phenolic content of the cider (17).

Novel cider-making methods?
Conventional apple juice production (straight pressing of apple pulp) results in a juice poor in flavonoids and with only 3-10% of the antioxidant activity of the fruit they were produced from. Main areas of loss of phenolic content are incomplete extraction of apple tissue, oxidation during milling and pressing, and clarification and fining (10). All ciders do share the low levels of flavonols, a subgroup of phenolic compounds. Since these are found predominately in the peel, this would indicate that current methods do not extract the phenolics from the peel effectively, and processing methods may need to be adapted to increase the level of these compounds in cider. By manipulating the cider-making process and choosing an apple cultivar with a high phenolic content, it may be possible to produce a cider with a higher phenolic content and increased potential health benefits when consumed in moderation (17).

Scientists from Wageningen University have presented a process to obtain an apple juice with an enhanced content of polyphenolic antioxidants by applying an extra alcoholic extraction either on the pulp or on the pomace. The novel production process resulted in a new type of apple juice with an enhanced health-protecting capacity: the antioxidant activity of the final juice was 5 times increased and the concentration of polyphenolic antioxidants up to 9 times increased compared to conventional processing (18).
Cider alcohol and cardiovascular health

Strong evidence from observational studies suggests that all alcoholic drinks are linked with lower risk of coronary heart disease. Thus a substantial portion of the benefit is due to the alcohol content of the drink. Here are some of the known mechanisms of effects of alcohol on risk of coronary heart disease (19):
- Alcohol increases serum level of HDL - the beneficial cholesterol.
- Alcohol decreases serum fibrinogen thus thinning the blood.
- Alcohol decreases platelet adhesion making the blood less sticky.

The health benefits of moderate cider consumption

In conclusion cider is a well-balanced, low-alcohol beverage with significant levels of polyphenols. Regular, moderate cider drinking may be a part of a healthy lifestyle together with wholesome food, exercise, keeping your weight down and not smoking. To drink moderately is to drink within the limits set by your health, the society in which you live and your obligations towards your family and friends: 1-2 drinks (1 drink = 10-12 grams of alcohol) a day for most women and 1-3 drinks a day for most men. Cider varies in alcohol content from less than 3% alcohol by volume in French "cidre doux" to 8.5% abv in traditional English ciders. As a low-alcohol beverage cider may help to maintain moderation. The balance of minerals in cider (high in potassium, low in sodium) helps to keep the blood pressure down (20).

References:
AIM – Alcohol in Moderation was founded in 1991 as an independent organisation whose role is to communicate ‘The Sensible Drinking Message’ and to act as a conduit for information from the industry, its associations and relevant medical and scientific researchers, legislation, policy and campaigns.

AIM Mission Statement

- To promote the moderate and responsible consumption of alcohol
- To encourage informed and balanced debate on alcohol, health and social issues
- To communicate and publicise relevant medical and scientific research in a clear and concise format, contributed to by AIM’s Council of 20 Professors and Specialists
- To publish information via www.alcoholinmoderation.com on moderate drinking and health, social and policy issues – comprehensively indexed and fully searchable without charge
- To educate consumers on responsible drinking and related health issues via www.drinkingandyou.com and publications, based on national government guidelines
- To inform and educate those working in the beverage alcohol industry regarding the responsible production, marketing, sale and promotion of alcohol
- To distribute AIM Digest Online without charge to the media, legislators and researchers involved in alcohol issues
- To direct enquiries from the media and others towards full and accurate sources of information
- To work with organisations, companies and associations to create programmes, materials and policies that promote the responsible consumption of alcohol.

AIM SOCIAL, SCIENTIFIC AND MEDICAL COUNCIL

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Home Office binge drinking summer campaign in UK

A new advertising campaign including a video which confronts young people with the reality of their drunken behaviour has been unveiled in the UK by Home Office Minister Alan Campbell.

The centrepiece of this year’s Know Your Limits campaign is a new internet viral advert which shows footage of people’s sober reactions when asked to behave as they would if drunk.

A presenter asks members of the public to smear vomit on themselves, pinch a stranger’s bum and fight. His demands escalate to glassing another person and throwing a bin through a window. The advert captures people’s expressions when confronted with what some people will do when they’re drunk.

Alongside this, the campaign includes a partnership with Channel 4 television show Hollyoaks which will lead to a new hard-hitting online drama to support the campaign’s messages.

The campaign runs from June to September and aims to change the behaviour of 18 to 24 year-olds who binge drink. It includes two new poster adverts and a new radio ad. A number of last year’s TV adverts, which made two thirds of 17 to 24 year-olds who saw say they would reconsider their behaviour, will also be shown.

Alan Campbell said, “We are committed to tackling the minority of people whose irresponsible drinking contributes to the alcohol-related crime and disorder which costs the UK up to £13 billion every year, not to mention the effect it has on the lives of millions of decent people... This campaign is about challenging people to think twice about the consequences of binge drinking and is the next step towards making people understand that excessive binge drinking is not acceptable.”

Drinkaware to relaunch with new image

Independent UK alcohol charity The Drinkaware Trust is to relaunch with a new brand image in a bid to get its alcohol education message across to a larger section of the British drinking public.

Drinkaware will now carry out its work under a new banner, ‘For the facts’, which aims to dispel some of the myths surrounding alcohol consumption.

‘For the facts’ contains a list of alcohol-related information such as a bottle of wine on average contains 600 grapes and British ale should be served at 54 degrees.

Drinkaware’s chief executive officer, Chris Sorek commented: “Alcohol has been around for thousands of years but there is still a world of myths and unknown facts surrounding it... People tell us they don’t want to be nagged or lectured about how much they drink - they want relevant and useful information so they can make their own decisions about what is right for them. Drinkaware is for the facts about alcohol - and that includes the quirky ones!”

The new brand identity aims to ensure consistent use of the Drinkaware logo across 3.1 billion products annually. The charity says that ‘for the facts’ strapline was positively tested in focus groups across the country. For more information visit www.drinkaware.co.uk

Statistics on Alcohol, England 2009

A new statistical report from the NHS information centre presents a range of information on alcohol use and misuse from a variety of published sources and includes additional analysis undertaken by the NHS Information Centre for health and social care which is presented in a user friendly format. The report aims to present a broad picture of health issues relating to alcohol in England and covers topics such as drinking habits and behaviours among adults and school children, drinking-related ill-health and mortality, affordability of alcohol and alcohol-related costs. Most of the data contained in the report have been published previously including information from the NHS Information Centre, Department of Health, the Office for National Statistics, Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs, Department for Environment, and Food and Rural Affairs.

To view, visit http://www.ic.nhs.uk/webfiles/publications/alcoholeng2009/Final%20Format%20draft%202009%20v7.pdf
Yougov poll finds women are drinking less than expected in UK

A survey by the pollster YouGov found that 73% of women aged 25 to 34 drink less than 14 units of alcohol a week, the maximum number of units recommended for women as part of the UK governments responsible Drinking Guidelines. The survey appears therefore to confirm ONS statistics that 93% of women drink less than 25 units (8g) a week in the UK and that average female consumption is 7.7 units. The poll suggests this restraint may be partly fuelled by vanity, with 74% admitting that they were 'constantly aware' of their appearance and behaviour on nights out. At the same time, advertisements are emphasising the effects of alcohol on the appearance to persuade women to drink less.

“We are seeing more women in their late 20s and early 30s with higher self-esteem. Their career, health and the way they look is increasingly more important,” said Georgia Foster, author of The Drink Less Mind.

The new research suggests that women do not know how many units their drinks contain, with 75% unable to assess correctly the number of units in a pint of beer, glass of wine or spirits measure.

For more information http://www.yougov.co.uk

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<th>Average weekly alcohol consumption for women: 1997-2008</th>
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1 1997-2007 percentages and bases weighted for unequal chance of selection
1 Fig. 1 for unweighted sample have been rounded to the nearest whole number. The sum of component items does not therefore necessarily add to the total shown.
2 weighted to population totals
3 weighted for unequal chance of selection

UK Licensing Act analysis

The Government has released a report into the effectiveness of the 2003 Licensing Act, suggesting the licensing process is too bureaucratic, complicated and time-consuming. Report on the Licensing Act 2003, produced by the House of Commons’ Culture, Media and Sport Committee also calls for the government to show support to the on-trade in encouraging sensible drinking promotions. The findings and recommendations, are available at:

http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/culture__media_and_sport.cfm
http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmcumeds/492/492.pdf

Summit to tackle alcohol misuse

An ‘Alcohol Summit’ to discuss how forthcoming legislation can change Scotland’s relationship with drink will take place in Edinburgh on Monday, June 22. The summit will bring together politicians, health experts, academics, the alcohol industry and retailers. Under discussion will be the measures outlined in the Scottish Government’s Alcohol Framework, published on March 2 this year following a public consultation.

Measures include setting a minimum price at which a unit of alcohol can be sold, banning off-sales promotions, placing a duty on licensing boards to consider raising their off-sales purchase age to 21 and establishing a Social Responsibility Fee. The Scottish Government intends to bring forward the proposals as part of a parliamentary bill later this year.
Diageo promotes sensible drinking to students

Diageo GB has used bar games to promote responsible drinking to students in campuses across the UK, as part of a new campaign called ‘Are you on top of your game?’

The initiative took place throughout May in 10 university bars, and used POS themed bar games to deliver messages to students during the stressful exam period.

Research commissioned by Diageo GB found that 67% of students consider exams to be their biggest source of stress and 22% drank more when they are feeling under pressure. 52% of all students saw drinking as a big part of the student lifestyle and the same proportion though that drinking too much is stopping them from performing at the top of their game.

The campaign run in association with The National Union of Students, aimed to educate students on the alcohol units in different drinks using a selection of POS items, themed around typical pub and bar games such as pool, darts and football.

In addition to posters, beer mats, runners and postcards, Diageo GB created a set of bespoke pool balls featuring the names of a selection of popular beer, wine and spirits brands and the number of units they each contain to give students clear and simple unit guidance in an innovative and eye-catching way.

YouGov poll analyses drinking habits by profession in UK

A Department of Health commissioned survey found that teachers and commercial drivers consume an average of 24 units of alcohol per week. Employees in the media, publishing and entertainment sectors were the heaviest drinkers with an average of 44 units a week and IT workers, service sector workers and people in finance, insurance and real estate drank an average of 34 units, 33 units and 29 units a week respectively.

50% of education workers monitored their alcohol intake, while only 29% of workers in the media and IT kept track of their consumption. Just under a third of media and IT workers and a quarter of finance sector workers said they sometimes felt under pressure from colleagues to drink.

Ben Willmott, senior public policy adviser at the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, said the findings showed how office culture could adversely affect alcohol intake, particularly in industries where entertaining clients or colleagues involved drinking.

He said: “This survey illustrates how work colleagues can influence how much we drink, even when we want to cut back. After-work drinks are often part of the fabric of our working lives, and it’s often tempting to go along with the crowd, even when you know your body needs a rest... It seems some industries are particularly prone to this effect – especially those where entertaining clients or colleagues goes hand in hand with a drink.”

Willmott called on employers to set clear policies on alcohol misuse warning against drinking to a level that affects work and health, and advise employees that support is available to deal with alcohol dependency.

For more information http://www.yougov.co.uk

5th International Wine and Heart Summit
July 15-18, 2009

For registration details visit www.winesummit.com

Wine & Health Lectures including contributions from:

Tedd Golfinger (chairman)
Marvin Slepian, MD, University of Arizona College of Medicine, Tucson, Arizona, USA
R. Curtis Ellison, MD, Boston University School of Medicine, US
Kevin R. Pogue, PhD, Section of Geology, Whitman College, Walla Walla, Washington
Roger Corder, MD, Wm Harvey Research Institute, London, UK
Serge C. Renaud, PhD, Bordeaux, France
Andrew Selwyn, MD, Harvard University School of Medicine, Boston
Morten Gronbaek, MD, PhD, Copenhagen,
Stephan Kamholz, M, New York University
Jeffrey B. Schwimmer, MD, University of California San Diego
Arthur Klatsky, MD, Kaiser Permanente Medical Center, Oakland, California
Helena Conibear, Executive Director, AIM (Alcohol in Moderation) Digest, Bath, UK
W. Douglas Weaver, MD, FACC, President, American College of Cardiology, Henry Ford Hospital, Detroit, Michigan, USA
Doubt cast on the potential effectiveness of Scottish Government plans to introduce minimum pricing for alcohol products

A report from the Centre for Economics and Business Research, Sheffield Hallam University, has found that the likely impact on heavy and hazardous drinkers has been over-estimated and that the benefits of increased alcohol prices, such as reductions in health, crime and workplace accidents and damage are over-estimated.

The report is a direct challenge to the arguments presented by the Scottish Government for higher prices in its drive against alcohol misuse, particularly among young people.

The report estimates that if minimum pricing at 40p per unit was introduced in Scotland:

- Harmful drinkers (that is, men who consume more than 50 units a week and women who consume more than 35 units) to whom the pricing legislation is targeted would reduce consumption by 2.3% or between one and two units a week on average.
- The value to individuals of improved health and job prospects would be £30 million a year or less.
- The savings to wider society including the National Health Service and policing costs and costs to victims of crime would be around £6 million a year, or 0.06% of the total NHS Scotland annual budget.

The report says the economic case for minimum pricing is weak and argues that moderate drinkers would have to pay towards a policy would have a marginal impact.

Ben Read, one of the report’s authors and managing economist at CEBR, said: “The figures do not present a compelling case once you take into account the substantial additional costs to consumers and the fact that heavier drinkers are least responsive to price increases... Our findings raise serious questions about the robustness of the Scottish Government’s evidence base for minimum pricing. We would suggest further research is done before a policy of this kind is considered.”

Both the Scottish government and the Scottish BMA have called for the minimum pricing of products, based on alcohol content.

The CEBR argues that overall, consumption of alcohol products appears to be price inelastic – this means that a 10% change in price will typically lead to a less than 10% reduction in consumption. The study estimated that hazardous and harmful drinkers have a price inelasticity of minus 0.21 across all alcohol products - this implies a 10% increase in the price would only lead to a 2.1% reduction in consumption amongst heavier drinkers. The report notes therefore that ‘pricing legislation is unlikely to have a significant impact on overall consumption levels of those drinkers that it is intended to target, unless price increases are set at very high levels, which would place an unfair burden on moderate drinkers.

The report can be viewed at www.cebr.com

Alcohol and depression factsheet

Alcohol Focus Scotland and Depression Alliance Scotland have worked together to produce an ‘Alcohol and Depression’ factsheet. This covers the links between alcohol, mood and depression, signs that someone has an alcohol problem, signs of depression, mixing medication and alcohol, tips for feeling better, and where to get support.

The factsheet is available at http://www.alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk/pdfs/Alcohol%20and%20depression%20factsheet.pdf

Scottish conferences examine alcohol marketing

Scottish politicians, members of the public health community and senior industry representatives, discussed alcohol policy at a conference organised by Holyrood Conferences in Edinburgh on Wednesday 3 June.

The Portman Group ran a seminar on ‘working with the alcohol industry’ at a conference on Wednesday 10 June in Glasgow. New guidelines on commercial sponsorship in the public sector, published by Consumer Focus Scotland, were promoted at the event: http://www.consumerfocus.org.uk/en/content/cms/News___Press/New_guidelines_on_co/New_guidelines_on_co.aspx

Details of the conference can be viewed here: http://events.pspltd.org/sponsorship_glasgow_2009/agenda/
New code of practice governs retail sales of alcohol in Ireland

A Code of practice on the sale and display of alcohol in shops and supermarkets was launched in Ireland on the 13th May.

The voluntary code, which will bring an end to special offers on alcohol scattered throughout stores, was introduced following discussions on the Intoxicating Liquor Act 2008 between the Department of Justice, Department of Health and trade representatives. It will be rolled out across the country.

Minister for Justice Dermot Ahern had intended bringing in provisions on the structural separation of alcohol in stores as part of the legislation, but agreed to defer enacting the provisions while the industry implemented the code.

Responsible Retailing of Alcohol in Ireland will implement and verify the code. The body is made up of 10 of the major retailers operating in Ireland and is chaired by Padraic White, former managing director of the IDA.

White said he would present his first report on code compliance to the Minister in September. He commented specifically on the commitment to the initiative shown by retailers so far. ‘This code tasks participating retailers to sell and display alcohol in a significantly different manner than other beverage and food products, thereby supporting ongoing efforts to reduce alcohol misuse in Ireland,’ he said.

The main provisions in the Code are:

**Display of Alcohol**
Alcohol to be displayed in only one part of the store, no other displays
Alcohol products to be placed where customers don’t have to pass through in order to obtain access to other beverages and food products

**Advertising**
In-store advertising of alcohol products is confined to the area in which they are displayed and will not be placed in windows or at internal locations where it is intended to be seen from outside the premises. Advertising materials produced by retailers will not be aimed at minors and will not seek to glamorise alcohol consumption or encourage excessive consumption.

**Sale of Alcohol**
The sale of alcohol products is permitted only between 10.30am and 10.00pm on weekdays & Saturdays and between 12.30pm and 10.00pm on any Sunday or St. Patrick’s Day (sales are not permitted on Christmas Day and Good Friday).

**Proof of Age**
Production of a proof-of-age document will be demanded in all cases where the customer appears to be under the age of 21 years, with the Garda Age Card is the preferred proof-of-age document.

**Staff Training**
Licence holders will ensure adequate training of staff members engaged in the sale of alcohol products that staff have an adequate knowledge and understanding of relevant areas of licensing law.

**Complaints procedure**
There will also be a complaints procedure so that the public can complain about any stores breaching the code.

**Independent Audit**
Compliance with this Code of Practice will be subject to independent audit and verification on an annual basis.

For more information, visit www.rrai.ie

Alcohol consumption down 6% to 1997 levels in Ireland

Alcohol consumption in Ireland declined by 6% last year, bringing it back to 1997 levels, according to a report by the Drinks Industry Group of Ireland (Digi), based on data from the Revenue Commissioners, found that excise receipts fell by 35% year-on-year in 2008.

In terms of excise receipts, sales of spirits declined by 61.4% last year. Cider sales were down by 32.5%, while beer declined by 15% and wine sales by 7.4%.

“Consumers are clearly opting to avail of the cheaper prices available in the North,” Digi commented.

In terms of volume, cider was the worst hit, recording a decline of 11%. Spirits was down by 7.7%; beer by 5%; and wine by 4.1%.

Digi chairman Kieran Tobin called on the Government not to increase taxes on alcohol and to consider reducing VAT and excise rates to stem the tide of cross-Border shopping. He said the Government must ‘wake up’ to the ‘reality that cross-Border shopping and the availability of cheaper alcohol in Northern Ireland is having a detrimental effect’ on the industry.
French wine drinking in decline

French households have cut back on their wine expenditure, according to newly-released government figures. Consumption was down to 43 litres per household in 2008, from 48 litres in 2007. The fall in domestic consumption comes at a time when French wine exports are also struggling. The agriculture ministry says exports fell by 15% in volume terms in the first quarter of 2009, and 30% by value.

Some commentators blame the decline in wine drinking in France on the current economic conditions, but consumption has been in steady decline for some time. Jean-Philippe Perrouty, research director of Wine Intelligence, commented: “In the UK, about 60% of adults under 35 drink wine. In France it’s 40% or 50%. And in France, when a young adult starts drinking wine - if he does - he’s very likely to become an occasional wine drinker.”

Report on IREB annual symposium

The latest ‘Focus Alcoologie’ from Ireb reports on the nineteenth Ireb symposium attended by around 70 researchers, with 41 works subsidised by the Ireb being presented.

The research symposium takes place every other year and provides an opportunity to bring together scientists working in all disciplines and from all over France and other countries, with different areas of expertise ranging from ethnology to genetics, who all want to achieve progress in research on alcohol.


Internet programme helps problem drinkers in Holland

A new Dutch study finds that the Internet may be able to help problem drinkers change their habits. About 19% of Netherlands residents who used a special interactive self-help web site over six months to deal with their excessive alcohol consumption said they lowered their weekly drinking to what was considered more “low-risk” levels, a survey found.

The free web site, called ‘Drinking Less’ (www.minderdrinken.nl), allowed users to anonymously seek guidance and motivation to help curb their drinking at any time of the day from any place with a Internet access. The study’s researchers said they believed such online intervention could work in most countries and be especially helpful in reaching the more than 80% of problem drinkers who never seek any help for their condition.

“While Web-based and digital interventions might not be effective for everyone, almost 20% of our participants were able to change their problem drinking to low-risk, while others became aware of their problems and were more willing to seek professional guidance,” the study’s corresponding author, senior scientist Heleen Riper of the Trimbos Institute and the Vrije Universiteit in the Netherlands. “Our study also indicated that Web-based treatment like this is effective for people with different educational backgrounds.”

Riper stated that such online help could be helpful as a standalone intervention, as a first step to more comprehensive treatment, or as a complementary therapy. For 84% of www.minderdrinken.nl participants, the website was the first time they had used any professional help for their drinking.

The findings are expected to be in the August issue of Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research.
Study redefines binge drinking for children and adolescents

The criteria used to assess blood alcohol concentrations (BACs) and binge drinking behaviours in children and adolescents should be based on pediatric rather than adult physiology, according to a new University of Pittsburgh study in the June issue of Pediatrics.

Current standards for BACs and binge drinking in children under 18 are based on adult criteria. However, a University of Pittsburgh researcher found that updating the current BAC formula to take into account differing body composition and the rates at which children and adolescents eliminate alcohol from their bodies, would redefine how many drinks constitute binge drinking for boys and girls 9 to 17 years of age.

John E. Donovan, Ph.D., author and associate professor of psychiatry and epidemiology at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine and the Graduate School of Public Health, examined child, adolescent and adult body compositions and alcohol elimination rates from the 1999-2002 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. He then used the updated formula to estimate BACs for more than 4,700 kids and teens ages 9 to 17 for alcohol intake levels of one to five standard drinks to determine the number of drinks at each age that led to a BAC of greater than 0.08 g/dL.

These estimations suggest that binge drinking should be defined as three or more drinks for 9- to 13-year-old children; four or more drinks for boys and three or more drinks for girls ages 14 or 15; and five or more drinks for boys and three or more drinks for girls ages 16 or 17. These results also suggest that the definition for heavy drinking should be modified as well.

Source: Estimated Blood Alcohol Concentrations for Child and Adolescent Drinking and Their Implications for Screening Instruments PEDIATRICS Vol. 123 No. 6 June 2009, pp. e975-e981 http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/reprint/123/6/e975

Unforeseen consequences of unit labelling in Australian study

According to a study in the Drug and Alcohol Review Journal, young people in Australia have very high awareness of standard drink labelling. However, this was predominately to help them choose the drinks that would get them drunk in the shortest time possible - hence getting the best ‘value’ for their money.

The study examines the young people’s perceptions of standard drink labelling, the purposes for which they use the labels and the potential impact on their alcohol consumption.

“Participants generally agreed that they notice drink labels and take in account what to purchase and consume. While earlier research with adult beer and alcohol drinkers has shown that standard drink labelling enables them to drink safely and responsibly, this motivation is not evident in the consumption choices with young drinkers and might even be counter-productive”, said co-author Professor Sandra Jones from the Centre for Health Initiatives, University of Wollongong.

Professor Jones adds, “There is a need to consider the deeper implications about alcohol packaging and marketing as they have real potential to impact and reduce alcohol-related harms. There is still an important role for standard drink labelling as long as it is combined with other policies addressing the price, availability and marketing of alcohol - which are of proven effectiveness in reducing alcohol related harm.”


Teen alcohol poisoning in Germany increase

Reports by the German Federal Commissioner for Narcotic Drugs said the number of adolescents treated in the hospital for alcohol poisoning went from 9,500 in 2000 to 23,165 in 2007 and 3,800 of these alcohol poisoning patients were ages 10-15.

Martin Stolle and colleagues of the German Center for Addiction Research in Childhood and Adolescence in Hamburg said that the main reason for the increase was the number of intoxicated teen girls.

Buddy campaign In South Africa focusses on dangers of drink drive and launch ‘Get Home Safe’ project

The Buddy Campaign backed by the Industry Association for Responsible Alcohol Use (ARA) has been running on varsity campuses over the past three decades in South Africa. The campaign, aims to promote responsible drinking among students and creates awareness of the dangers of alcohol abuse, and in particular drinking and driving.

“This year the ARA has committed close to R200 000 to three selected universities in support of their annual Buddy Campaigns to combat student alcohol abuse” says Adrian Botha, director of ARA.

Through the Buddy Campaigns at the University of Stellenbosch (Maties), University of Kwazulu-Natal (UKZN) and Rhodes University in Grahamstown, awareness is generated regarding the dangers of drinking and driving with the goal of making it socially unacceptable and “uncool” to drive after exceeding the legal limit allowed for alcohol consumption. Particular attention is given to first year students by engaging them in activities such as a mascot dance, alcohol free events, orientation week guidance, exhibitions that focus on responsible drinking and a host of other fun-related initiatives.

“These key universities were targeted as they have either been consistently involved with the Buddy Campaign since its inception in the late 1980’s or have shown initiative at promoting responsible alcohol use on campus. This campaign has become quite a tradition on many campuses in South African and we continue to see them grow from strength to strength,” added Botha.

Part of the success of the Buddy Campaign at these universities includes the Buddy Buses at Maties which have proved to be enormously popular and were very well supported by the local pubs and businesses in the area. Pubs that contributed to Maties RAG were given special Buddy Campaign notice boards promoting pick-up spots for the Buddy Buses.

The campaign at Rhodes University included the launch of the ‘Get Home Safe’ Project earlier this year that provides a vehicle offering a free transport service to all registered students to use as a safety precaution when they find themselves in a predicament. UKZN has taken a slightly different stance and concentrated its attention on mentoring first year students during their orientation period on life skills, which includes responsible drinking behaviour.

UK analysis of universal versus targeted preventions

The UK based Drug and Alcohol Findings policy and research site has published two new bulletins reviewing key alcohol-related studies:

• A systematic review of emergency care brief alcohol interventions for injury patients. The review found confirmation that brief advice to risky drinkers identified in accident and emergency departments can cut drinking and reduce the chance of further injuries and readmissions; the issue now is why this happens sometimes but not always.

• A preliminary study of the population-adjusted effectiveness of substance abuse prevention programming: towards making IOM programme types comparable.

One of the biggest strategic decisions facing prevention planners is whether to target high-risk groups or to prioritise universal programmes. The report examines the efficacy of universal or targeted interventions against different substances.

To view the two bulletins in detail, visit http://findings.org.uk
American Association for the Advancement of Science advises parents to use science to convince teens a sober prom is better

In the US, middle and high school proms and graduation are big events and present a wide array of opportunities for alcohol to be served. Science Inside Alcohol Project of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) advises parents to ‘Assume that your child will be tempted to drink alcohol at the end of the school year … So start talking to your child about alcohol right now’.

Instead of just asking your teen not to drink, the Science Inside Alcohol Project suggests explaining how alcohol can affect his or her body. Here are five ways alcohol can ruin prom night or graduation:

- **They May Not Remember** - Teens spend months preparing for prom and graduation and cherish those memories throughout their lives. But if they drink, there’s a good chance they may not remember any of it. The hippocampus, or the area in the brain that stores memory, is still maturing in teens. Drinking even small amounts of alcohol can make kids forget what they did while drinking and even black-out completely.

- **They May Do Things They Don’t Want to Do** - Alcohol helps release inhibitions, and teens who drink may indulge in risky behaviours such as unprotected sex or drunk driving. The brain’s prefrontal cortex, which is involved in planning and decision-making, does not completely mature until a person’s mid-to-late twenties. Using alcohol can harm a teen’s ability to reason and weigh options instead of just doing something because it is fun or feels good.

- **They May Get Really Sick** - Who wants to spend prom night throwing up or so dizzy that he or she can’t dance? Alcohol can irritate the stomach causing dehydration, which often leads to vomiting and dizziness. Throwing up also may be a sign of alcohol poisoning, which causes body systems to break down and requires immediate medical care. That’s a good way to ruin everyone’s night.

- **They May Feel Horrible for the Next Couple of Days** - Even small amounts of alcohol can cause a hangover, which can lead to thirst, dizziness and lightheadedness. Headaches caused by blood vessel expansion and sleepiness due to narcotic effects on the central nervous system are other symptoms of a hangover. Your teen may have to forgo events scheduled for the next day or two while trying to get better.

The Science Inside Alcohol Project of AAAS is developing a series of lessons for middle school students, an electronic and print book for parents and other products to teach the science of alcohol. This project, which is part of the highly regarded “Science Inside” series by AAAS, is funded by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA).


**Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010**

The third meeting of the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee took place on April 29-30, 2009 and was available to a wider audience via webinar. Eric Rimm, chair of the Ethanol Subcommittee, stated that the current guidance on moderate drinking and its relationship to total mortality, coronary heart disease (CHD), and breast cancer risk is unlikely to change in the upcoming 2010 Guidelines. The Subcommittee has four action items to be completed by May 2009 relating to 1) drinking patterns; 2) alcohol and weight gain; 3) predictors of alcohol disorders; and 4) relationships between alcohol and macro- and micronutrient profiles that will be worked on with the support of the Energy Subcommittee.

For more information, visit http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/DietaryGuidelines.htm
Alcohol related prom season crash fatalities drop 65% 1982-2007

According to the Century Council, one third of the alcohol-related traffic fatalities involving teenagers occur during the Prom-Graduation season - the months of April, May and June. However, new statistics show that progress is being made to reduce traffic deaths in these months. For all accidents involving 15-20 years old drivers, and their 15-20 year old passengers the number of fatalities has fallen from 1,304 in 1982 to 494 in 2007. The number of these fatalities that involve alcohol has also fallen by more than a third.

The number of fatalities involving a 15-20 year old driver where the BAC was 0.08 or over has reduced from 608 deaths in 1982 to 148. These accidents now also account for a smaller percentage of the overall fatalities (down from 47% in 1982 to 30% in 2007). In 2007 the total number of deaths where the driver had a BAC of 0.01 or more was 187, compared to 732 in 2007.

The full table can be viewed at http://www.alcoholstats.com/mm/docs/7006.pdf

Canadian study finds that risk and frequency of binge drinking increase with the frequency of drinking

Researchers from the Université de Montréal and the University of Western Ontario analysed the drinking habits of Canadians to identify the relationship between frequency of drinking, usual daily consumption and frequency of binge drinking, taking into consideration possible age and gender differences.

Study data was obtained from the GENACIS Canada project, an international collaboration examining how social and cultural variations can influence the drinking habits of men and women. Close to 11,000 respondents – 5,743 women and 4,737 men – were asked to report on their alcohol consumption within the last 12 months. Participants were asked questions such as: “How often did you usually have any kind of drink containing alcohol?” And: “How often did you usually have five drinks or more on one occasion?”

The study found (i) that those who drink less than once a week are less likely than weekly drinkers to take more than two drinks when they do drink; (ii) that the usual daily quantity consumed by weekly drinkers is not related to their frequency of drinking; but that (iii) the risk and frequency of binge drinking increase with the frequency of drinking.

“The relationship between drinking frequency and consumption per occasion might be both cultural and biological,” says study coauthor Andrée Demers, a Université de Montréal sociology professor and director of the Research Group on the Social Aspects of Health and Prevention. “The Canadian drinking culture has a ‘time-out’ depiction of drinking. Alcohol is a boundary mark between week and weekend, work and leisure, and therefore between routine and time off.”

The NSDUH Report - ‘Exposure to substance use prevention messages and substance use among adolescents: 2002 to 2007’

SAMHSA’s National Survey on Drug Use and Health found that most youths have been exposed to some kind of substance use prevention message - whether having seen or heard an alcohol or drug prevention message through the general media, participated in special classes about drugs or alcohol, or talked with a parent about the dangers of tobacco, alcohol, or drug use. The general media (such as radio, TV, posters, or pamphlets) was the primary source for substance use prevention messages. However, the percentage of adolescents reporting exposure to drug or alcohol use prevention messages through media sources declined from 83.2% in 2002 to 77.9% in 2007.

The importance of parents as the source of substance use prevention messages increased slightly between 2002 and 2007. In 2002, 58.1% of the youths talked with at least one of their parents during the past year about the dangers of tobacco, alcohol or drug use and 59.6% of the youth had such talks in 2007.

Younger youth were more likely than older youth to report talking with a parent about the dangers of substance use: 61.6% of those aged 12 or 13, 59.5% of those aged 14 or 15, and 57.1% of those aged 16 or 17 had such talks.

In general, youths who had been exposed to some kind of substance use prevention message were less likely to report past month use of alcohol use, cigarettes, or illicit drugs than youths who had not had such prevention messages.

For more information, visit http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/2k9/prevention/prevention.pdf

UK Code of Practice for Alcohol Sales – impact upon the retail sector

The All Party Retail Group, in association with the All Party Wine and Spirit Group will hold a joint meeting on the recently launched consultation on a mandatory code for alcohol retail on Wednesday 4 June 2009 at 14.00 in Committee Room 13, Westminster Palace.

The proposed code, which will comprise a number of national mandatory conditions for all sellers of alcohol as well as local conditions that can be implemented on a discretionary business, will fundamentally alter the Licensing Act 2003 and the way in which alcohol is sold across England and Wales.

This meeting will allow attendees the opportunity to hear directly from those affected by the code, how they feel it could work in practice and the challenges it poses for enforcement, retail operations and local councils. The vehicle for this code (the Policing and Crime Bill) is currently progressing through its stages in the Lords. The detail of the proposals this Bill is being used to implement have not yet been debated or voted on, due to the use of secondary legislation. This meeting will provide an opportunity to influence and inform future parliamentary debate.

The panel will consist of:
- Councillor Chris White, Chair of the Culture, Tourism and Sport Board, Local Government Association
- Commander Simon O’Brien, Head of Licensing, Association of Chief Police Officers
- Shane Brennan, Public Affairs Director, Association of Convenience Stores
- Andrew Opie, Director of Food and Consumer Policy, British Retail Consortium

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