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Scotland

MSPs considered a petition on the 23rd September signed by 10,000 people saying Scotland's proposal to raise the off trade purchase age in Scotland discriminates against young people.

The Coalition Against Raising the Drinking Age in Scotland (Cardas) thinks criminalising 18 to 21-year-olds would not change attitudes to drinking.

Labour, the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives have all come out against raising the off-licence purchase age and the student representative on the SNP's national executive, Caroline Henderson, is against it. However, the Scottish Government believes raising the age has worked well in Scandinavia and in the three places in Scotland where it has been tried, Armadale, Stenhousemuir and Coupar. The government's under-21s sales ban is part of a number of measures to cut alcohol-fuelled crime and health problems, including setting a minimum price for alcoholic drinks in an attempt to stop cut-price alcohol deals. The move has been backed by members of Scotland's medical profession.

Ireland

A group of psychiatrists has called for a complete ban on all alcohol advertising and sponsorship in Ireland.

Psychiatrist Dr Bobby Smyth of the Irish College of Psychiatrists, speaking at the publication of a policy paper commented:

"A recent report by the Office of Tobacco Control revealed that our 16-17-year-olds spend €20.09 per week on alcohol. This amounts to an illegal alcohol market of €145 million in this country and as a society we seem to be accepting this as 'normal'," he said.

However, the Drinks Industry Group of Ireland said yesterday there was a sharp decline in alcohol consumption during the first half of this year. An analysis of excise receipts from the Revenue Commissioners reveals sales of alcohol were down 14% last month, compared with August 2007 and fell by 7% during the first eight months of the year.

The group's chairman Michael Patten predicted the decline would continue.

UK

People could be given the power to object to alcohol licensing applications on public health grounds under a radical plan from a commission charged with improving health in Liverpool.

The 'Health is Wealth' commission proposes the introduction of community licensing forums as part of a 12-point plan to improve public health in the North West.

Such forums have already been established in Scotland since changes to the law there in 2005

allowed licensing boards to consider the impact on public health of any new off licences, pubs or clubs.

Licensing laws in England and Wales do not allow for specific public health considerations. But the commission believes the government's commitment to tackle alcohol-related crime and disorder means there is scope to act.

The commission was established by the University of Liverpool as a contribution to the city's year as European Capital of Culture.

Scotland's radical alcohol policy agenda provokes national debate in UK

The Scottish government's programme for 2008/09

Consultation on the Scottish government's discussion paper 'Changing Scotland's relationship with alcohol: a discussion paper on our strategic approach' closed on 9th September. Subject to the consultation results, measures such as prohibiting off trade sales to under 21s; minimum pricing; introducing social responsibility fees; and alcohol-only checkouts, may be delivered through planned criminal justice and licensing legislation. The proposals on alcohol are part of a Health Bill; one of 15 bills that the Scottish government plans to introduce. England's 'Safe. Sensible. Social' Alcohol Policy consultation is open until the 14th October, offering less radical yet serious implications for all sectors of the industry.

The proposal to ban alcohol off-sales to under-21s has been condemned as unfair or unworkable by many associations and companies including the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), Diageo, the Wine and Spirit Trade Association as well as consumer affairs groups and adults of the 18-21 age group. Many have highlighted the consequences of such a measure whereby 18 –21 year old Scots would buy alcohol over the internet or over the border in England. Issues such as the potential criminalisation of adults who may marry, vote, fight for their country, own a house, yet potentially not be able to buy alcohol, have been extensively discussed.

Consultation responses

FSB Scotland spokesman Colin Borland said the organisation's members had spent a lot of time and money complying with the latest licensing laws — getting architects' plans for their shops, sending staff on courses and paying for other professional services. "The blunt instrument of blanket regulation, no matter how well-intentioned, gives rise to unintended consequences and lumps everyone – the exemplary trader and the utter rogue – together," he said. "The priority for any new policy has to be tackling the damage done by the abuse of alcohol and requires some sharp, targeted action at the root causes and biggest perpetrators".

The WSTA called on the Scottish Government to enforce current laws around alcohol and end its 'nonsensical policy' of raising the purchasing age, arguing that "It is by getting police out on the streets enforcing the law that we will make our communities safer".

Diageo stated that the Scottish government offered 'no evidence' to support its view that minimum pricing will reduce alcohol related harm. Higher prices may affect consumption, but not necessarily among the groups the Government wishes to target, they argue.

Benet Slay, managing director of Diageo Great Britain, states "We are disillusioned with the Scottish Government's paper and frustrated that Government is trying to place responsibility for tackling alcohol misuse on the shoulders of the drinks industry and thus failing to recognise that everyone has the responsibility - individuals, Government, civil society and industry... We believe the most effective approach to promoting the highest standards of responsible behaviour across industry and for every consumer, is through a fair, transparent and effective system of co-regulation."

Diageo's consultation response outlines a new system of co-regulation for alcohol promotions. It suggests the Government sets overall objectives and mandatory standards across a range of alcohol issues whilst the industry should be free to develop a "sensible and easy-to-work system of regulation and practice to meet Government's objectives."

Evelyn Gillan, project director of Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems, an independent lobby group established by the Royal Medical colleges, says Scotland is pioneering in its acknowledgement that alcohol is a problem for the whole of society. "What the government has done, crucially, is call for an overall reduction of the consumption of alcohol. It is saying that we can no longer afford to see this as an individual problem. We all need to drink less. That's a fairly critical shift."

Jack Law, chief executive of Alcohol Focus Scotland (AFS), states that Scotland is breaking new ground in its licensing law, which includes a public health principle. "Decisions in licensing will have to be made in relationship to public health, not just in business and commercial interests." The charity supports the establishment of a minimum price and alcohol only check outs and a social responsibility fee. "This document is trying to reinforce the view that the enforcement of licensing regulation starts at the point of sale with the licensee, not the police," commented Law. AFS believes 18 to be the correct legal purchase age for Scotland.

CARDAS

The Coalition Against Raising the Drinking Age in Scotland (CARDAS) a group of local and national youth and student representative organisations has coordinated one of the most complex responses. Membership includes NUS Scotland, the Scottish Youth Parliament, NUSSL, and Northern Services, along with a broad range of local student representative organisations from across Scotland.

CARDAS provides an impressive evidence base as to why 'the proposal to raise the minimum purchase age for off-sales alcohol purchases from 18 to 21, which we believe is at best ineffective, and at worst counterproductive – and a clear infringement on the rights of responsible adults' would not work.

CARDAS is supportive of many of the consultation papers' proposals such as the prevention of the sale of alcohol as a loss leader, an end promotions offering free alcohol or quantity discount for bulk buying, the introduction of smaller standard measures of wine at 125ml and spirits at 25ml and the students representatives call for mandatory and clear unit information to be presented on drinks menus. CARDAS also calls on the Scottish Government and Local Authorities to deliver and develop alternative activities for young people to prevent alcohol misuse, as activities focusing on alcohol are not surprising when there is little else available in the community for under age youth to do at present in Scotland. The organisation also supports a ban on televised alcohol advertising before the 9pm watershed and in cinemas for films with a certificate below age 18.

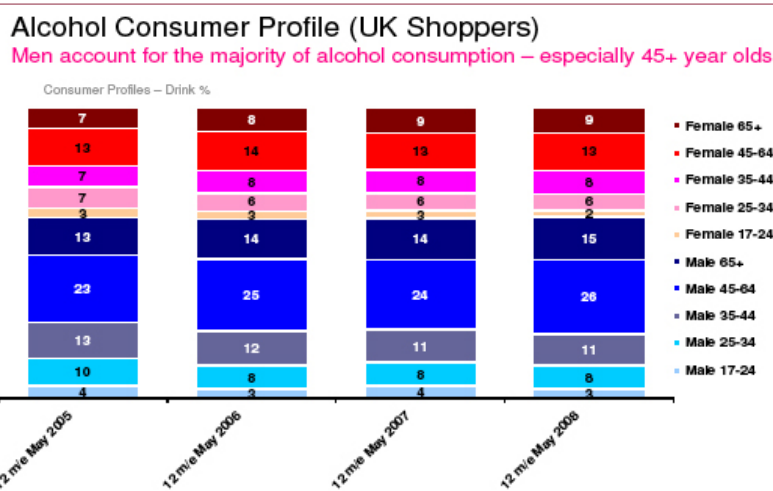
To access the report, visit http://www.cardas.org.uk/downloads/CARDAS_consultation_response.pdf

Public responses to the call for the off trade purchase age to rise to 21

- In an ongoing poll on the BBC website, of the 26,896 people who had responded as of 21st August 2008 to a poll question asking 'Should the legal drinking age be raised to 21?', a majority of 53.10% answered 'no' 44.27% who answered 'yes'.
- In an ongoing e-petition on the Scottish Parliament website, as of the 27th August 2008, over 2100 people had signed the e-petition calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to 'drop its proposal to raise the age for off-sales alcohol purchases from 18 to 21'.
- In a similar ongoing e-petition on the Scottish Parliament website, as of the 25th August 2008 627 people had signed the e-petition calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to 'reconsider its plans to raise the age for off-sales alcohol purchases from 18 to 21'.
- As of 21st August 2008, a protest group on the social networking website 'Facebook' called 'Don't raise the drinking age' - referring specifically to the Scottish Government proposal to raise the minimum purchase age - had 2,984 members.
- As of 21st August 2008, a similar protest group on the social networking website 'Facebook' called 'If they raise the drinking age to 21 in Scotland...I'm leaving' - had 1,050 members.
- In an ongoing poll on the Alcohol Focus Scotland website, of the 652 people who had responded as of 21st August 2008 to a poll question asking 'Should the purchase age of alcohol be raised to 21?' a majority of 58% answered no, 42% answered 'yes'.

A survey conducted by Ace Fieldwork on behalf of supermarket giant Asda, included more than 10,000 customers interviewed at more than 30 stores across Scotland. The survey results were issued on the final day of a consultation by the Scottish Government.

Two-thirds disagreed with proposals to ban promotions, such as three-for-two offers and 61% rejected the idea of the introduction of minimum pricing levels. Almost three-quarters objected to the installation of separate checkouts for alcohol, forcing them to queue twice during their weekly shop and 60% said that neither



setting minimum prices, nor banning promotions would be effective in lowering consumption of alcohol.

The supermarket's survey shows a third of shoppers agree with minimum pricing, mooted at 35p per unit, with which SNP ministers would increase the cost of cheap lager and cider. Only 17.5% thought it would be effective. 30% backed a ban on drinks promotions, while 20% said there should be separate checkouts for alcohol.

Paul Kelly, corporate affairs director for ASDA, pointed out tough new changes forbidding supermarkets from displaying alcohol anywhere other than specially designated aisles are already due to come into force next year. "We believe that we should let one set of reforms take place before making further changes... While everyone accepts that some people drink too much and the pressures this puts on public services and the public purse, penalising the vast majority of shoppers - in these tough economic times - is hugely unpopular."

Kelly also stated that Asda was making efforts to tackle the issue of alcohol in Scotland. He announced that from September 30 Asda would no longer sell beer or cider lines with "free extra" product in them - such as cans of beer with 13.5% free.

Whisky marketing passes responsibility audit

An in-depth audit of industry marketing practice has concluded that Scotch Whisky companies are meeting the highest standards of responsible brand marketing and promotion. Research by The Scotch Whisky Association (SWA) found that distillers had successfully implemented tough industry rules into everyday marketing practices. The SWA Code of Practice on Responsible Marketing and Promotion was launched in 2005. It is mandatory in the UK and sets best practice for SWA members worldwide.

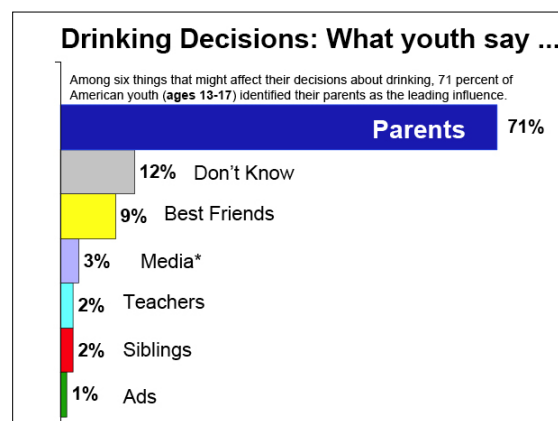
Jack Law, Chairman of the Code's Independent Complaints Panel and Chief Executive of Alcohol Focus Scotland, reviewed the SWA's audit process and findings. He said: "The SWA's Code has taken on board the frequent criticism of self regulatory codes - that they are soft on enforcement - by introducing mechanisms to fine, name and shame, and ultimately expel a member continually breaching the Code. This is a welcome dimension and one that Alcohol Focus Scotland would like to see introduced into the codes of similar bodies".

Following the audit, which involved face to face interviews and a review of marketing material, SWA members have agreed to revise the Code to introduce new sponsorship guidelines and to extend its mandatory scope EU-wide.

New school year in US and talking to teens about underage drinking

Anheuser-Busch is reminding parents to talk with their teens about resisting negative peer pressure when it comes to underage drinking by distributing leaflets and other material via community groups. Anheuser-Busch are running two programmes: Family Talk, which helps prevent underage drinking by providing tips to parents on how to openly and honestly communicate with their teens and 'College Talk', which helps parents talk to their college-bound student about underage drinking while at college. Family Talk was developed by authorities in child psychology, education, family counseling and alcohol treatment to encourage open and honest communication about alcohol issues. College Talk was developed by an advisory panel of authorities in the fields of education, family therapy, student health and wellness, alcohol treatment and social norms marketing and through conversations with parents and students. The materials can be accessed at www.familytalkonline.com and www.collegetalkonline.com.

Recent research shows that parents can have a significant influence on their children's decisions on this subject. According to the 2007 GfK Roper Youth Report released in September, 71% of children ages 8 to 17 cite their parents as the No. 1 influence on whether they drink alcohol - a statistic that has held constant since the survey began more than a decade ago.



Commentary on alcohol and cancer by Harvey E. Finkel, MD

So much of the information reported about the relationships of cancer to alcohol consumption is conflicted and confusing, that the comprehensive 200-page meta-review from the Australian Cancer Institute in New South Wales is most welcome. We must keep in mind that cancer is not one disease, but many, and that its risk factors are very complex and variable.

It is clear that the risks of some cancers are raised by excessive drinking, and we all know that heavy drinking increases disability, destruction, and death from many causes. What has been hard to fathom is the precise relationship between some causes and moderate drinking. And are there even cancers whose risk is diminished by moderate drinking?

We are pointed toward some of the answers by the Australian report, which was summarised in the July issue of AIM Digest. I will append comments based on my own experience as a hematologist-oncologist and my readings of the relevant medical literature.

Alcohol has been cited as a carcinogen by the International Agency for Research on Cancer. From a practical view, I would agree when the alcohol intake is chronically excessive. A strong point made by the Australian report is that as many as 35 percent of cancers are preventable by the avoidance of risky behaviour. Avoidance of tobacco is number one on this list. Excessive sun exposure is on the list, as is chronic heavy drinking. Dietary factors, obesity, and physical indolence have been indicted, but I don't think there's

enough evidence for conviction.

The Australian survey finds that moderate drinking, an average of two drinks per day, does not increase the overall risk of cancer. Four per day, however, and especially eight drinks per day raise the risk substantially. Although coronary risk may fall, medical risks in addition to cancer, perhaps most notably for cirrhosis of the liver, rise steeply at sustained higher levels of consumption.

Aerodigestive cancers (mouth, throat, larynx, esophagus) become more frequent as alcohol intake rises above moderate levels, the liability multiplied by smoking. Even moderately heavy drinking may lead to cancer arising in the liver, almost always with some degree of cirrhosis as a way station. Indeed, any sort of chronic liver disease, alcohol-related or not, may eventuate in liver cancer (hepatoma).

Whether breast-cancer risk rises with moderate drinking has been the single most difficult question of the alcohol-cancer controversy. The Australian survey, like many but by no means all of the scores of reports in the literature, notes a gradual rise in risk with rise in consumption. It does acknowledge the protective effect of the vitamin folic acid. I should recognize the recently reported data from southern France suggesting a threshold of consumption of about 1.5 drinks per day, below which women experience a 40 percent decrease in risk compared to nondrinkers, and above which, at moderate levels, risk does not increase significantly.

A balanced perspective would keep in mind that, fearsome as breast cancer is, heart disease kills vastly

more women. The cardiovascular benefits of moderate drink, therefore, are not to be dismissed.

The other puzzling, even murky, alcohol-cancer association concerns another group of very common cancers, those of the large intestine (colon) and rectum. The Australian survey finds a peculiar dichotomy: no alcohol-related risk among women, but a very substantial increase in men with higher intakes. There have been many studies that would cast doubt on these results. I must conclude about colorectal cancer what applies to most cancers in their possible relationship to drinking: more study is necessary.

No other direct associations were found by the Australians. A long list of cancers are not related to any level of drinking, but evidence appeared suggesting that alcohol consumption might be associated with reduced risk of thyroid cancer and of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. A number of studies over recent years have found that moderate drinking reduces the risks of cancers of various organs, including kidney and prostate. One of the most intriguing demonstrated that resveratrol triggers a death pathway among the cells of human leukemia and breast cancer, yet is harmless to normal cells.

This survey does not address differential effects of different beverages, which is demonstrated by some studies. Irrespective of this nothing here would tend to belie the wisdom of avoiding excess in all cases.

(For references, please see column 1 page 7)

More about white wines and their contents

by Gordon J. Troup, School of Physics, Monash University, Clayton 3800, Victoria, Australia.

In the early days of the research on the salutary effects of moderate wine drinking, Jack Masquelier, the discoverer and researcher of the effects of the small numbered polymers of the polyphenols in (red) wines could say: "Drink red wine for your health and white wine for your enjoyment" [1], because all the salutary effects of wine were supposed to come from these compounds, which white wines were denied in the making, unless they were left on the seeds and skins for a while. Clinical studies showed that red wine certainly reduced the ratio of the 'bad' cholesterol (LDL) to the 'good' (HDL) in the blood stream, but there were also studies, e.g. [2], that showed that certain white wines (low in total phenolics) had the opposite effect, while others were not as efficient as the red ones.

Research was started on the other molecules, mainly monophenols, for their salutary effects.

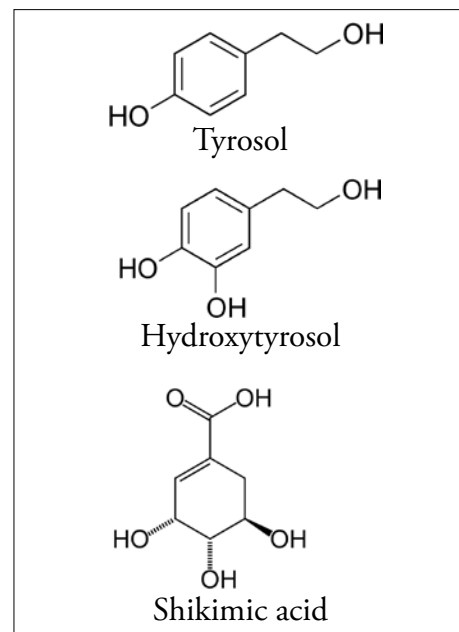
An account of some of the very interesting findings are given below. These were obtained mainly from the two papers [3, 4] summarised in the July edition of AIM-Digest: [4] was 'in press online' at the time, and so not available immediately then.

Two monophenols, tyrosol and hydroxytyrosol, develop in wine during the fermentation process, and are not found in the grape: they are good antioxidants. Because they are small, they can take part in chemical reactions that the polyphenols cannot, such as helping in a healing pathway for heart tissue after a heart attack, and strengthening the tissue in the first place. Another molecule, shikimic acid, which has a hexagonal (but not phenolic) ring with 3 hydroxyls on it, is also a good antioxidant. It can be a forerunner for polyphenols and tannins.

Masquelier [1] tended to put most of the blame for tissue damage and cell damage on the superoxide radical (O_2^-), which is needed for certain chemical reactions in our bodies, but can run amok. It is now known that this radical is in fact less toxic to cells than the hydroxyl radical $\cdot OH$, a reactive oxygen species radical (ROS). In fact it is stated in [3] that "Virtually all the biomolecules including simple carbohydrates, lipids, proteins and DNAs are potential targets for hydroxyl radical attack". Fortunately, simple sugars and acids such as malic acid, tartaric acid

and shikimic acid are themselves antioxidants and contained in white wines. Of course, the content will depend on the white wine and the treatment it has received. In [4], the white wine used was Soave DOC Classico 2004 (Le Rive), which was found to have a higher content of tyrosol and shikimic acid than other white wines.

More work needs to be done in the area of characterising which white wines, if combined with a good (Mediterranean) diet, cause the LDL/HDL cholesterol ratio to increase rather than decrease. Research continues on resveratrol with very promising results for it to be an anti-aging agent.



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Discussions concerning alcohol as an independent protective lifestyle factor

Many studies have linked moderate drinking to a lower risk of heart disease. What's been less clear is whether people who exercise, abstain from smoking, maintain an optimal weight and adhere to an appropriate diet would see any additional benefit from drinking.

A study by Harvard University researchers sought to discover if in healthy, physically fit, nonsmoking men, drinking one or two units of alcohol a day provided any additional protection against heart attack. The study found that participants consuming one-half to two drinks a day had the lowest heart attack risk 40-60% lower than healthy men who didn't drink, irrespective of beverage choice.

"These results tend to refute the oft-quoted hypothesis that lower coronary heart disease seen among moderate drinkers is due to their associated healthy lifestyle habits, and not to their alcohol consumption," wrote Dr. R. Curtis Ellison, director of the Institute on Lifestyle and Health at Boston University School of Medicine, and co-author of a critique of the study.

Using data from more than 50,000 health professionals, study author Dr. Kenneth J. Mukamal, assistant professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School, and his colleagues identified more than 8,800 men who were nonsmokers, ate a healthy diet, exercised at least 30 minutes a day and weren't overweight. Over a 16-year period, 106 of the men had heart attacks, but those who had two drinks a day had the lowest risk

for heart attack, while non-drinkers had the highest risk.

Several other recent studies have added to the evidence suggesting that moderate alcohol intake complements a healthy lifestyle.

A recent British study identified moderate alcohol consumption among four healthy behaviours (including not smoking, exercising and eating five servings of fruits and vegetables a day) that added 14 years to life, compared with men and women who did not adopt these behaviours, and Danish researchers reported that both physical activity and moderate drinking have a protective effect on the heart and an additional benefit when combined as part of a healthy lifestyle.

However, none of the studies were "randomised controlled trials" -- the gold standard of scientific research, whereby people are randomly assigned to an intervention, such as exercising or consuming alcohol.

There is lots of observational data to support moderate drinking, said Dr. Robert A. Vogel, professor of medicine and director of clinical vascular biology at the University of Maryland School of Medicine. "However, we do not consider alcohol a validly tested drug because to do that you would have to randomise people for years with alcohol or not - and that's not a study that can be done," he said.

Vogel said he enjoys a daily glass of wine as part of a healthy lifestyle and tells patients who do the same that it's "a reasonable thing to do." Many doctors, though, tend to shy

away from recommending alcohol to their patients. Instead, they have emphasised other lifestyle modifications, including diet and exercise.

"Clinicians are very resistant to taking alcohol out of the 'alcoholism' box and asking what its effects might be at more typical levels of intake," Mukamal said. "Even if clinicians don't believe there are benefits to alcohol, and I think that's a reasonable concern since we don't have randomised trails, they should at least be discussing it, but I don't think that's happening."

Ellison agrees: For middle-aged and older men and postmenopausal women who don't have ethical, religious or health reasons for avoiding alcohol, "physicians should at least inform them that the scientific data currently available strongly suggest that a small amount of alcohol on a regular basis may lower their risk of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, dementia, and even total mortality," he said.

Sources: Kenneth J. Mukamal, M.D., M.P.H.; R. Curtis Ellison, M.D.; Robert A. Vogel, M.D.; Oct. 23, 2006, Archives of Internal Medicine; Oct. 23, 2006, news release, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Boston; Oct. 22, 2007, news release, Archives of Internal Medicine; Jan. 7, 2008, news release, PLoS Medicine; American Heart Association

Frequent alcohol consumption may increase endometrial cancer risk in older women

Postmenopausal women consuming 28g or more of alcohol a day (this is above sensible drinking guidelines) may double their risk of endometrial cancer, suggests a study led by researchers at the University of Southern California (USC).

This is the first prospective study to report a significant association between alcohol and endometrial cancer according to says Veronica Wendy Setiawan, assistant professor of preventive medicine at the Keck School of Medicine of USC. “Previous studies have shown that alcohol consumption has been associated with higher levels of estrogens in postmenopausal women, which could be the mechanism by which daily alcohol intake increases one’s risk of endometrial cancer.”

According to the National Cancer Institute, endometrial cancer is the most common cancer of the female reproductive system. It accounts for approximately 6% of all cancers in women.

Researchers drew upon data from the Multiethnic Cohort Study (MEC), an epidemiological study of more than 215,000 people from Los Angeles and Hawaii. The study followed 41,574 postmenopausal African-American, Japanese-American, Latina, Native-Hawaiian and White women in Los Angeles and Hawaii for an average of 8 years. Data on alcohol intake and endometrial cancer risk factors were obtained from a baseline questionnaire.

“This discovery is important as it suggests that changes to certain lifestyle choices may potentially

help alter risk of the disease,” says Henderson, the paper’s senior author. “However, these findings are preliminary and must be investigated further before any recommendations about alcohol consumption can be made.”

The study also found that the association of alcohol intake and endometrial cancer is stronger among lean women than among overweight or obese postmenopausal women, suggesting that lean women may be more sensitive to modest elevations in hormone levels resulting from alcohol drinking than obese women who already have high levels of estrogen and therefore mask alcohol as an independent risk factor.

The study will appear in the International Journal of Cancer, and is now available online.

Binge drinkers forget negative events during binge drinking

Studies into the memories of people engaged in heavy drinking have shown that it is the inability to remember the worst excesses of a night out - while remembering the happy things that led up to them - is one of the main causes of repeated binge drinking.

Professor Theodora Duka’s of Sussex University research found that memory material acquired in an intoxicated state is less effectively retrieved in a sober state. Thus people who abuse alcohol forget the consequences of intoxication during periods of abstinence.

“Alcohol facilitates memories for emotional events experienced before intoxication – mostly

positive – and impairs memories for emotional events experienced after intoxication – often negative – biasing memory to positive effects of alcohol, and support [for] further drinking.”

Memory tests on volunteers who were shown emotion-laden images before, during and after a bout of drinking found there was a clear degradation in memory as the alcohol began to build up in their bodies. Alcohol facilitated memory for material seen after its administration. More importantly, under the influence of alcohol, emotional images seen before alcohol consumption were recalled more whereas emotional images

seen after alcohol consumption were recalled less, the researchers found.

Further studies found alcohol also increases the risk of making wrong judgments and impulsive decisions, especially in women. This is another reason why drinking can increase the risk of further bingeing by affecting the brain’s control process, Professor Duka said. “Social heavy drinkers who binge drink show inability to withhold an inappropriate response when sober. They also are worse in planning than their counterparts”.

Professor Duka presented her findings at The British Association’s Science Festival at Liverpool University in September.

Adherence to mediterranean diet reduces risk of major chronic diseases

A new meta-analysis has shown that strictly following the Mediterranean diet reduces the risk of dying from cancer and cardiovascular disease as well as the risk of developing Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disease. The investigators say that greater adherence can be a relatively simple tool to reduce the risk of premature death in the general population. This meta-analysis shows, in an overall analysis comprising more than 1.5 million healthy subjects and 40 000 fatal and non-fatal events, that greater adherence to a Mediterranean diet is significantly associated with a reduced risk of overall mortality, cardiovascular mortality, cancer incidence and mortality, and incidence of Parkinson's disease and Alzheimer's disease.

“To the best of our knowledge, this is the first report that has systematically assessed, through meta-analysis, the possible association between adherence to a Mediterranean diet, mortality, and the occurrence of chronic

diseases in the general population. The practical implication is that we are able to talk to our patients and show them that sticking to this diet, improves their overall health and quality of life,” lead investigator Dr Francesco Sofi commented.

Individuals who stuck strictly to a Mediterranean diet had significant improvements in their overall health, including a 9% reduction in all-cause mortality, a 9% reduction in mortality from cardiovascular disease, and 6% reduction in cancer mortality. Although only three trials examined the association between adhering to the diet and the risk of Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disease, there was a reduced risk of these diseases when individuals closely followed the Mediterranean diet.

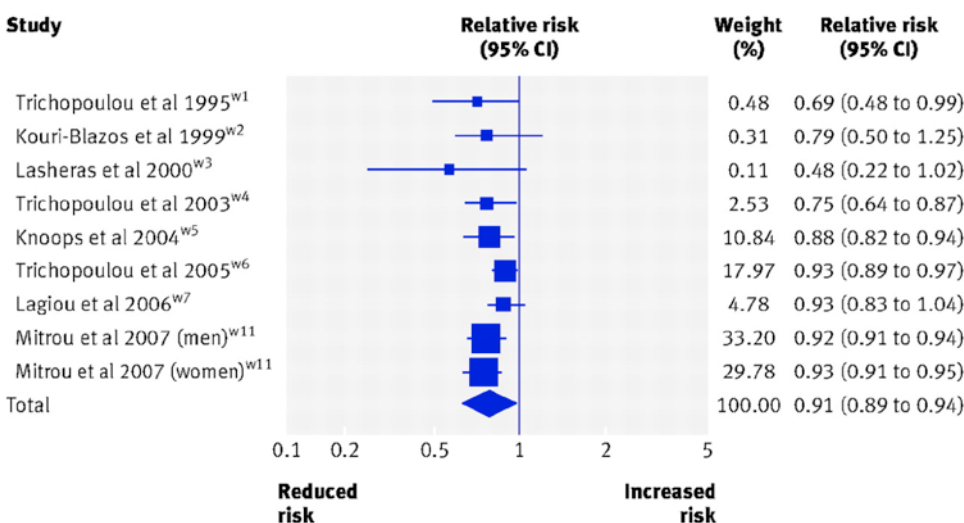
Definition of adherence to Mediterranean diet

Adherence to a Mediterranean diet was defined through scores that estimated the conformity of the dietary pattern of the studied population with the

traditional Mediterranean dietary pattern. Specifically, people whose consumption of components considered to be part of a Mediterranean diet (vegetables, fruits, legumes, cereals, fish, and a moderate intake of red wine during meals) was above the median consumption of the population were assigned a value of one, whereas a value of zero was given to those with consumptions below the median. By contrast, people whose consumption of components presumed not to form part of a Mediterranean diet (red and processed meats, dairy products) was above the median consumption of the population had a value of zero assigned, and the others had a value of one.

“The results overall showed that increasing two points on the adherence score results in a significant protective effect in terms of chronic diseases,” said Sofi. “The study supports the guidelines and recommendations of all the current scientific organisations that encourage the Mediterranean diet. It does say more, however, in terms of adherence, meaning it is important to actually stick with the diet.”

Risk of all cause mortality associated with two point increase in adherence score for Mediterranean diet. Squares represent effect size; extended lines show 95% confidence intervals; diamond represents total effect size



Sofi, F. et al. BMJ 2008;337:a1344

Reduction in risks associated with a two-point increase in the adherence score

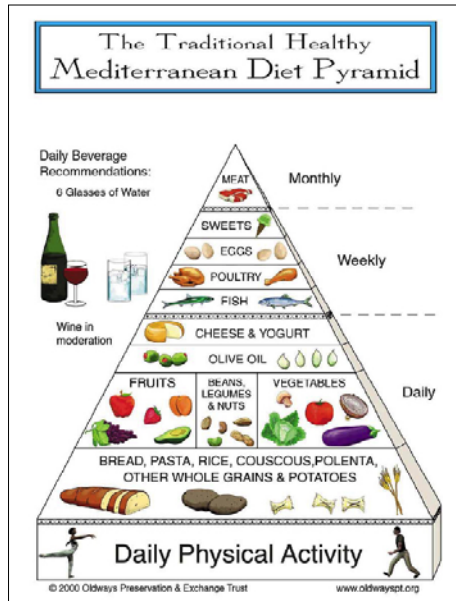
End point	Relative risk (95% CI)
All-cause mortality	0.91 (0.89-0.94)
Cardiovascular mortality	0.91 (0.87-0.95)
Cancer mortality	0.94 (0.92-0.96)
Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease	0.87 (0.80-0.96)

Adherence to mediterranean diet reduces risk of major chronic diseases (continued)

In terms of applying the findings to the real world, Sofi said creating an adherence score based on “a theoretically defined Mediterranean diet” could be used as preventive tool for reducing the risk of mortality and morbidity in the general population. However, he added, it is important to define the diet properly.

The full report is available at www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/337/sep11_2/a1344

Source: Sofi F, Cesari F, Abbate R, et al. Adherence to Mediterranean diet and health status: meta-analysis. *BMJ* 2008; 337:a1344. DOI: 10.1136/bmj.a1344.



UK Alcohol industry Alliance to champion healthy consumption

The alcohol industry is in talks to form an alliance that will aim to champion healthy attitudes to drinking. The 'Project 10' campaign will mirror the food industry's recent launch of Change4Life, an initiative launched in conjunction with the Department of Health to encourage healthy diets and exercise.

Producers, retailers and the on-trade will fund the alliance and its work in a bid to convince the Government that it can use marketing to positively change drinking 'culture and behaviour'. Led by the Portman Group, the initiative is looking at creating a logo or symbol and a strapline that can be used by manufacturers and retailers to help drive a attitudinal change in the UK's binge drinking culture.

A spokesman for the Portman Group says: "There is a growing willingness within the industry to use its marketing to promote responsible drinking. A number of companies have developed their own campaigns and are using their marketing to promote responsibility messages and a number are also funding the Drinkaware Trust. Despite this, the alcohol industry is continuing to explore how it could further strengthen its work in this area."

Benefits to the heart of moderate alcohol consumption vary depending on lifestyle

Research by Michael Marmot from the Department of Epidemiology and Public Health at University College, London, found that smokers with the worst diets and poorest exercise habits could consume as many as 14 standard drinks a week and still lower their risk of having a heart attack, stroke or other form of cardiovascular disease. Greater quantities were less beneficial, though still better for those people than being teetotal.

But fit non-smokers who ate well increased their chances of falling prey to heart disease by drinking moderately compared with not at all, though their absolute risk was still much lower than that of their unhealthier peers.

Professor Marmot said health advice - which supports moderate drinking from middle age onwards - should

now be modified to reflect how people may be differently affected.

"Most people drink for reasons other than alcohol's health benefits, but the widely publicised [heart protection] benefits may be used to justify or increase their habit," he wrote in the *Journal Of Epidemiology And Community Health*. "The most [protective] effects from moderate drinking were found among those with the worst behaviour profile."

The findings come from the long-running Whitehall study of British public servants, which has followed the health fortunes of 10,000 Londoners since the 1980s.

Source: 'Who benefits most from the cardioprotective properties of alcohol consumption? - health freaks or couch potatoes?' A. Britton, M. Marmot, and M. Shipley *J Epidemiol Community Health* 62: 905-908

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.

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Creina S. Stockley MSc MBA,
The Australian Wine Research
Institute

Dr. Thomas Stuttaford,
Medical Correspondent to the
Times and Author

Dr. Elisabeth Whelan,
President American Council on
Science and Health

BBPA respond to BMA assertion that the 'sensible majority are willing to pay more for bad minority' and report on difficulties faced by the on trade

The British Medical Association (BMA) is wrong to argue that responsible drinkers are willing to pay more tax on alcohol to deal with the behaviour of an irresponsible minority, according to the British Beer and Pub Association.

In a letter to the BMA's Head of Science and Ethics, Dr Vivienne Nathanson, the BBPA Chief Executive Rob Hayward points to new polling that indicates that the public overwhelmingly believes that higher taxes unfairly penalise sensible drinkers and will not significantly reduce binge drinking. Mr Hayward has asked to meet Dr Nathanson to discuss the issue.

In the letter, Mr Hayward said: "People who drink alcohol need to be fully aware of the damage that can be done to their health by excess. On this our two organisations agree... In our view, the British Medical Association is wrong to press the Government to deter the minority by punishing the majority with higher taxes. That is also the view of the large majority of the public, which overwhelmingly rejects your case for higher taxation."

Mr Hayward pointed to a BBPA-commissioned opinion poll by ComRes which found that:

- 61% of people said they would not be willing to pay more tax on alcohol to prevent others from problem drinking, as against 31% who said they would;
- 82% of people say that higher taxes unfairly penalise sensible drinkers;
- 86% of people say that higher taxes will not significantly reduce binge drinking;

- 60% of people opposed recent increases in tax to tackle binge drinking;

- 76% of people see higher taxes as a threat to traditional pubs.

Mr Hayward added: "It is clear therefore that calls for higher taxes do not have public support on grounds either of fairness or effectiveness. In fact, piling more taxes on beer would drive more people away from pubs, which remain the safest setting for the social pleasures associated with drinking responsibly."

The BBPA has also published a report entitled 'A wake up call for Westminster' which highlights the issues being faced by the brewing sector and on trade in the UK. The report finds that Pubs are closing at an unprecedented rate - Two closures per week from 2000 to 2005 have now reached 35 per week, or five per day. At the same time, brewers' profit margins have decreased because of falling beer consumption and changing consumer tastes, shifting demographics, the smoking ban, aggressive supermarket loss leading and the current economic climate, which is putting a huge strain on household budgets. In addition the government has implemented increased regulation and taxation: A 9% beer duty increase was imposed in the 2008 Budget, and through a tax 'escalator,' the Treasury has mapped out a 2% above inflation increase over the next four years' states the report.

For more information, please visit the BBPA site www.beerandpub.com

British Liver Trust - new leaflet on 'Alcohol and Liver Disease'

Diageo GB is sponsoring the latest edition of the British Liver Trust's publication, Alcohol and Liver Disease. The newly revised leaflet gives sensible drinking guidelines, explains how to calculate units and describes the effects of binge drinking. It also gives information on alcoholic liver disease, tests and treatment along with useful contacts.

The Trust's chief executive Alison Rogers, said: "We are really pleased that a major alcohol producer is helping the Trust to produce information materials that play a role in informing people about sensible drinking. We want everyone to be aware of how much alcohol is too much and what can happen to the liver as a result of alcohol."

The leaflet can be downloaded from <http://www.britishlivertrust.org.uk/home/the-liver/liver-diseases/alcohol.aspx>



UK Government identifies types of ‘problem drinker’ ahead of new alcohol campaign

Research by the Department of Health has identified the nine types of heavy drinker it says are most at risk of liver damage and other alcohol-related illnesses. The “types” include depressed drinkers, macho drinkers and stressed drinkers.

Heavy drinkers are classed as those who regularly exceed at least twice the daily guideline of 35 units a week for women and 50 for men.

The research has been released as the Government launches a new alcohol campaign designed to crack down on heavy drinkers. A trial information campaign has been launched in north-west England.

Over the next few months, around 900,000 households will receive leaflets through the post which highlight the link between drinking and conditions such as cancer and liver disease. They will also be given information about where they can get help for drinks disorders, including a website where they can calculate their consumption levels and access self help guides.

The campaign is targeting adults over the age of 35 who fall into the nine drinking categories.

The Government says that it hopes the campaign will help 4,000 people in the area to cut down on their alcohol consumption within a year. If successful, it will be rolled out across other regions.

According to official figures, 50,000 young men and women end up in hospital through heavy drinking each year in England. Alcohol-related illnesses and accidents cost the NHS in England £2.7 billion a year.

The nine types of drinker are:

Depressed drinker - Life in a state of crisis eg recently bereaved, divorced or in financial crisis. Alcohol is a comforter and a form of self-medication used to help them cope.

De-stress drinker - Pressurised job or stressful home life leads to feelings of being out of control and burdened with responsibility. Alcohol is used to relax, unwind and calm down and to gain a sense of control when switching between work and personal life. Partners often support or reinforce behaviour by preparing drinks for them.

Re-bonding drinker - Relevant to those with a very busy social calendar. Alcohol is the ‘shared connector’ that unifies and gets them on the same level. They often forget the time and the amount they are consuming.

Conformist drinker - Traditional guys who believe that going to the pub every night is ‘what men do’. Justify it as ‘me time’. The pub is their second home and they feel a strong sense of belonging and acceptance within this environment.

Community drinker - Drink in fairly large social friendship groups. The sense of community forged through

the pub-group. Drinking provides a sense of safety and security and gives their lives meaning. It also acts a social network.

Boredom drinker - Typically single mums or recent divorcees with restricted social life. Drinking is company, making up for an absence of people. Drinking marks the end of the day, perhaps following the completion of chores.

Macho drinker - Often feeling under-valued, disempowered and frustrated in important areas of their life. Have actively cultivated a strong ‘alpha male’ that revolves around their drinking ‘prowess’. Drinking is driven by a constant need to assert their masculinity and status to themselves and others.

Hedonistic drinker - Single, divorced and/or with grown up children. Drinking excessively is a way of visibly expressing their independence, freedom and ‘youthfulness’ to themselves. Alcohol used to release inhibitions.

Border dependents - Men who effectively live in the pub which, for them, is very much a home from home. A combination of motives, including boredom, the need to conform, and a general sense of malaise.

Investigation launched into underage drinking habits

The London Assembly has launched an investigation into underage drinking habits in the capital. The investigation will focus on 11 - 21 year olds, who will be interviewed at schools and youth groups. The London Assembly says that at present there is “no clear picture” of how big the problem of alcohol in the capital is.

Participants can also take part online by completing a six-question survey asking them about their attitudes to

drinking amongst young people. In addition, a Facebook page has been set up encouraging people to share their opinions.

According to figures by the Health and Public Services Committee, which is conducting the survey, 24% of UK 15 year olds have been drunk 10 times or more

For more information visit http://www.london.gov.uk/assembly/scrutiny/health_ps_alcohol.jsp

The Drinkers Alliance launch new website in UK



A new website has been launched this month, designed to give drinkers a voice in the discussions surrounding alcohol. The Drinkers Alliance, www.drinkersalliance.com, offers a potential platform and discussion opportunity for the responsible drinkers who have been left out of the current debate on alcohol.

While opinion polls show the public support very targeted action to deal with problem drinking, Governments in London and Edinburgh are proposing measures that target the general population,

hence the site discusses the Scottish Government's consultation on the future of alcohol regulation (see lead article) – which the British Government is observing with interest.

The Drinkers Alliance aims to encourage people to make their voice heard in the media and in Westminster. "All are welcome to join the online debate, take part in regular polls, upload video content and invite their friends to join them. It is crucial that the voices of average drinkers are heard in this increasingly frantic debate if it is to have any chance of being even handed. Until now the people these new restrictions would impact haven't had the chance to get involved. The Drinkers Alliance provides the first opportunity to influence Government's thinking on alcohol and bring some balance to the debate around alcohol" states the WSTA who have pioneered the web initiative.

Alcohol supplement in UK daily newspaper

The Guardian newspaper published an alcohol supplement in September covering a range of alcohol issues facing the UK. The supplement was sponsored by Diageo.

The supplement covers a range of issues with features on education, young people, health and the history of alcohol consumption and legislation. A report by Professor Ian Gilmore, president of the Royal College of Physicians and chairman of the Alcohol Health Alliance, argues that whilst further legislative measures will not be popular with politicians, the public or the industry, they are still necessary as

price and availability are the biggest levers for consumption.

Much of the supplement focused on the issues facing young people; one report looked at a number of initiatives that have been raising awareness of alcohol issues amongst young people including theatre projects and the success of specific intervention programmes looking at issues such as family problems. Another report gives details of a survey of teenagers opinions on alcohol and binge drinking.

To view the publication, visit <http://www.guardian.co.uk/responsible drinking>

Home Office leaflet encourages responsible alcohol consumption for 18-24 year olds

The Home Office have released a new alcohol leaflet targeted at 18-24 year old binge drinkers to encourage them to drink sensibly and to highlight the consequences of drunk anti-social behaviour. The introduction states "This leaflet will help you make choices about how much you drink. It tells you how alcohol can affect you, explains how you can stay safe when drinking and what to do if someone is in trouble after drinking too much. It's not about stopping drinking, but it's about making you aware of what some of the consequences could be of regular binge drinking and making sure alcohol plays a more positive part in your day-to-day life'.

The leaflet can be downloaded from the Home office website <http://drugs.homeoffice.gov.uk/publication-search/alcohol/leaflet>



UK study reveals some radio presenters encourage drinking culture

A UK survey funded by the Department of Health and the Home Office has found that a percentage of radio presenters encourage a culture of drinking among young people in the UK. The study by researchers from the University of the West of England, Bristol is part of the governments 'Know Your Limits' campaign.

Researchers analysed 1,200 hours of weekend radio output across a range of BBC and commercial stations aimed at young people, and identified over 700 extracts where references were made to alcohol. The study focused on radio programmes broadcast between December 2007 and February 2008, across a range of musical genres. The stations included BBC Radio 1, 1Xtra, Kiss 101, Key 103, Galaxy Birmingham and Kerrang! Radio.

Professor Norma Daykin, who led the research, said her team found that drinking was a regular topic of discussion on some of the

programmes they listened to, and that many presenters used it to create repartee and connect with their listeners.

The alcohol references on commercial stations were found to be higher in volume and more likely to encourage drinking than those on BBC stations, with Kerrang! Radio shown to be particularly likely to encourage excessive drinking. Alcohol references were also influenced by music genre; hip-hop and black music stations such as 1Xtra and Kiss 101 had a low density of comments. On the BBC stations, almost half of the alcohol-related comments were either neutral or discouraged excessive drinking, whereas this was true of only 17% of the comments on commercial radio.

The research also identified that presenters were not entirely responsible for the messages about alcohol, and that the production values of some programmes and stations can sometimes encourage

content and performance styles that reinforce a jovial approach to alcohol, and undermine health promotion messages. Not all comments by presenters supported drinking, however: a fifth were neutral, and 2% discouraged excessive drinking, with some suggesting reasons to limit drinking, such as safety, work and health. Listeners were generally found to be more enthusiastic about drinking than presenters, but the assumption that drinking is necessary to have a good time was rarely challenged. Prof Daykin added: "Alcohol was frequently positioned as a marker of the weekend, and a hangover as a marker of a good night out. The notion of not drinking alcohol to enjoy yourself, particularly at times of celebration such as Christmas and New Year, seemed unthinkable".

The study was presented at the British Sociological Association annual conference in Brighton on September 5.

Guidance for GP alcohol 'Direct Enhanced Service' in UK

A guidance document has been issued to GPs to support the delivery of clinical directed enhanced services (DES), alcohol being one of the five key health and service priorities. The DES allows specific funding for GPs to deliver Screening and Brief Interventions (SBIs) to newly registered patients. The DESs began in April 2008 and are scheduled to run for 2 years backed by £50 million funding proposed earlier in the year, with an annual £8 million alcohol allocation.

According to the guidance, practices are required to screen newly registered patients using a shortened screening tool such as FAST. Those identified as positive will be given the full AUDIT test to determine if they are drinking at hazardous or harmful levels, and then offered the recommended intervention of 5 minutes brief advice in line with University of Newcastle's primary care guidance 'How Much is too much?'. Dependant drinkers should be referred to local treatment services.

Practices will be paid £2.33 for each newly registered patient aged 16 and over who have received screening.

Earlier this year an alcohol primary care services framework was released by the NHS to support commissioners in setting up SBI programmes in primary care.



BIIAB hails Tesco's training initiatives

Tesco has become the first off-trade retailer to have its in-house training recognised under the BII awards body's new Good Practice Recognition Scheme. The scheme acknowledges the steps companies are taking to tackle under-age sales through staff training, and Tesco has been specifically recognised for its Think 21 programme.

BIIAB director Cathie Smith said: "It's a challenge for any retailer to ensure that policies which deal with under-age alcohol sales are adhered to at all times... Tesco has invested a considerable amount of time and money in establishing a robust training programme and takes its commitment to responsible operating very seriously".

'Safe. Social. Sensible' conference



The National Alcohol Conference 'Safe. Sensible. Social. – Delivering in Partnership' will be held on 4th-5th November at East Midlands Conference Centre, Nottingham.

The Conference on 5th November will include contributions from Vernon Coaker, Dawn Primaralo, Kevin Brennan, Prof Mark Bellis, Betsy Thom, Sir Al Ainsley Green and Prof Ian Gilmore.

For more information visit <http://www.emphasisnetwork.org.uk/events/alcoholnov2008/agenda.htm>

Diageo launch DVD on dealing with underage drinkers

Diageo GB is launching a DVD aimed at educating both on-trade and off-trade employees on the importance of identifying and refusing underage drinkers.

The DVD was launched in August initially for use by Marston's Pubs and Tesco One Stop retailers with the aim to make it more widely available. The DVD takes the form of a 20 minute scripted film, with a bar worker and a shop worker discussing their encounters with underage drinkers attempting to buy alcohol from their respective outlets. The film offers advice and techniques on how to deal with what Diageo says can be an "awkward and sometimes intimidating experience".

The DVD is accompanied by materials on the current law on the underage purchasing of alcohol, especially regarding the Licensing Act 2003.

Kate Blakeley, head of social responsibility at Diageo GB, said, "There is already good work being done by the industry looking to tackle the issue of alcohol sales to the underage. We felt it was important to produce one tool to address the on and off-trade to overcome the barriers which many of these employees face in their working environments".



UK adults of parenting age drink to unwind

A survey of 3,000 women for the website Netmums found that 49% of respondents were drinking regularly at home (3 or 4 times a week) to wind down from a stressful day, with 43% of all respondents stating that they felt they should be drinking less.

22% of those polled regularly drink more than 14 units of alcohol a week. Of these, 81% drink regularly at home in the evenings to wind down from a stressful day, while chatting with their partners or watching TV, and a further 14% say they need it after a stressful day.

Of those exceeding the 14 units, 86% felt they should drink less than they do, 46% said that if the Government or a health professional told them it was unhealthy they would try to change how much they drink, 30% said they'd be interested but they'd probably continue and 23% felt they would continue to make their own choices.

The findings were backed by a second survey for the Government's 'Know Your Limits' campaign, which also found that drinking in response to stress was most common amongst people of parenting age. 51% of 25 to 44-year-olds told the YouGov poll that they drank through stress, compared with just 30% of those over 55.

Ireland: Garda seize alcoholic drinks following the introduction of new powers

The Intoxicating Liquor Act 2008, which came into operation on July 30th in Ireland, allows Garda to seize alcohol from under-18s, or from adults in possession of alcohol in a public place.

Inspector Patrick McMenamain from Pearse Street Garda station estimated that 2000 cans and bottles of alcoholic drinks confiscated in Dublin over three weekends following the introduction of new Garda powers were worth about 5,000 Euros. The drinks were confiscated in more than 700 seizures in the greater Dublin area. About 25% of the alcohol was taken from under-18s. The remainder would have been taken from adults.

The alcohol was seized in streets, car parks, public amenities, laneways and other public areas. The drink

had been bought legitimately and no particular form of retail outlet for supplying the alcohol was identified. "The issue is the on-street drinking and the public order and anti-social behaviour", Insp McMelamin said.

Not many prosecutions arose from these seizures as people escaped a conviction if they surrendered the alcohol, but underage drinkers would be referred to a juvenile liaison officer. The new powers would help to reduce anti-social behaviour. "They do enable us to be more effective in dealing with issues of anti-social behaviour, underage drinking and public order". The new powers would also help garda in their policing of underage drinking often associated with celebrations following the release of the Junior Cert results.

EC Share access to public health videos

The European Commission website has a catalogue of video clips and TV commercials produced by health executives across Europe on issues relating to public health and alcohol, smoking and drugs. Most of these videos have been produced and aired in the context of public awareness campaigns in the countries concerned.

All videos are shown in their original language version, most of the time with English subtitling. The webpage provides a facility for people to share their video clips or obtain a copies of the clips.

Visit http://www.healthclips.eu/theme_en.cfm?theme_id=1



French campaign to highlight the risks of alcohol consumption during pregnancy



The Collège national des gynécologues et obstétriciens français (CNGOF) and Entreprise et Prévention launched a national information campaign on the risks linked to the alcohol consumption during pregnancy. This campaign aims to facilitate dialogue between the doctors and their patients about alcohol consumption and recommends 'Zero' alcohol during pregnancy. The partners are providing doctors with two leaflets. 'Can I drink a glass to his health?' and 'Alcohol and pregnancy, if one spoke about it?' The leaflets provide doctors with detailed information of fetal alcohol syndrome and give advice on the manner to approach the subject during the consultation.

"The consequences of fetal alcohol syndrome affect too many children", comments Professor Jacques Lansac, President of the CNGOF, "With Entreprise et Prévention, we wished to mobilize the professionals and help the women to understand this risk and to speak about it more easily with their doctor".

The leaflets can download from www.alcooletgrossesse.soifdevivre.com.

Legal drinking age for wine and beer likely to be raised in France

Teenagers may face a raise in the legal drinking age for beer and wine in France due to a rise in binge drinking among French youth. French health advisors are questioning their belief that children should be initiated in the art of wine-drinking at an early age. Currently, 16-year-olds can buy wine and beer (not spirits) in cafés and restaurants and all alcoholic drinks in supermarkets and other shops with a license. The Health Minister Roselyne Bachelot recently announced her plans to introduce legislation, likely to be introduced next year, which will make it illegal to sell alcohol to youth under 18.

Eurocare launch new website

Eurocare (The European Alcohol Policy Alliance) has re launched its new look website. Eurocare is an alliance of some 50 voluntary and non-governmental organizations across 20 European countries working on the prevention of alcohol related harm in Europe.

The website carries news on EU alcohol and health strategy and the EU health Forum and other issues surrounding alcohol including advertising, labelling, road safety and taxes, trade and development

To view the site, please visit <http://www.eurocare.org>



French wine industry lobbies for more freedom

The French wine industry has written an open letter to the French Government to demand it do more to protect wine growers from moves by the anti-alcohol lobbyists attempts to tighten legislation. In the letter, the French wine regions describe how **“contrary to promises made by the president, the government is ignoring the legal injustice to the wine sector.”**

During his presidential campaign, Nicolas Sarkozy said he would “open communication on wine”, including on the Internet. But there has been no progress since his election.

One of the main concerns expressed in the letter was the Government’s decision to ban wine advertising on the internet after Paris-based National Association for the Prevention of Alcoholism and Addiction (ANPAA) secured a ruling against Heineken in January. The judgement ruled that the internet is not authorised as a publicity vehicle in France according to the Evin Law.

The industry, mobilised by Christine Tarby, president of lobbying group Vins et Société, claims that because the internet was not listed as an advertising medium under the 1991 Evin Law, which regulates tobacco and alcohol advertising, it is illegal. As it stands currently, the law prohibits any incitement to buy or drink wine as well as any appearance of wine advertising on TV or in cinemas.

Members of the French wine trade also expressed concern over journalists’ inability to write freely about wine. At the beginning of this year a French court ruled that

newspaper articles on wines should be subject to the same health and safety guidelines as alcohol advertising and display health warnings. This followed a ruling by a Paris county court that an editorial piece in Le Parisien named “The Triumph of Champagne” could be construed as advertising. The newspaper was ordered to pay €5,000 in damages.

Tarby, who has spent much of this year explaining to the different wine regions the extent of the threat facing them, said: **“The internet did not exist in its current form when the Evin Law was drawn up. We are not looking for total liberty but are asking for the same limited rights on the web as we have in the press.”**

Vin et Societe have launched a graphic campaign calling for freedom of expression in France for wine and internet sales - the Loi Evin fails to define producers rights on the internet, separated from ‘advertising’ to describe wines and consumers rights to information regarding domaines and wines - The campaign leads with the comment ‘Danger - speaking about this bottle could make you a criminal’.

The letter follows the leak of a proposed new law to ban wine on the internet in France, putting it on the same level as pornography.



US consumption trends

The annual GALLUP poll into US drinking habits, found 62% of Americans say that they drink alcohol, a figure that has varied little in the last 10 years. Survey results are based on telephone interviews with 1,016 national adults, aged 18 and older, conducted July 10-13, 2008.

The study found that average consumption in the past week was 3.8 alcoholic drinks. This is the first time the average has dropped below 4 drinks since 2001. It had been as high as 5.1 in 2003.

In each of the last four Gallup consumption polls 36% of Americans reported drinking alcohol in the last 24 hours. This compares to an average of 30% from 2000-2004. 'Daily drinking'

is more common among Americans of higher socioeconomic status. Over the past four years, an average of 42% of college graduates report having had a drink in the last 24 hours, compared with 32% of those who have not graduated from college. Similarly, 41% of drinkers with incomes of \$75,000 or greater say they have had a drink in the past 24 hours, compared with 36% of middle-income respondents (those with household incomes between \$30,000 and \$74,999) and just 23% of those residing in lower-income households (with incomes of less than \$30,000). Men are more likely than women to have had a drink during the previous day, 43% to 28%.

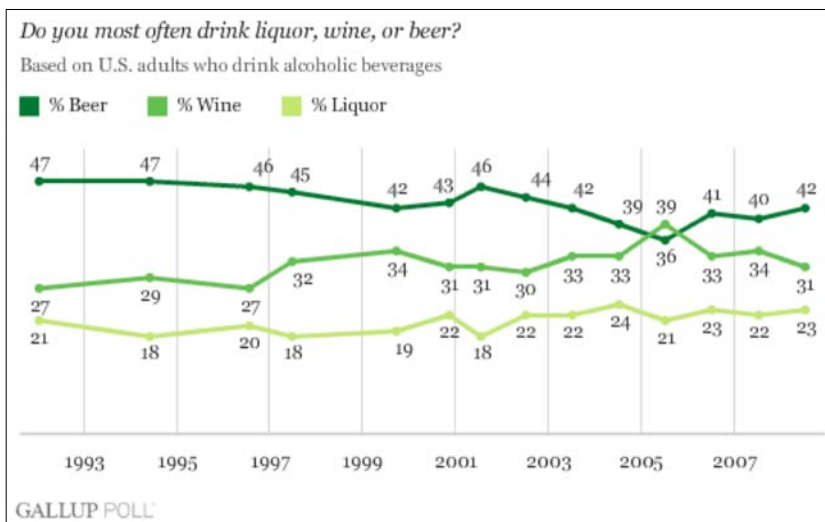
Older drinkers are more likely than younger drinkers to have consumed

alcohol in the previous 24 hours - 39% of those aged 50 and older say they drank in the last 24 hours, compared with 35% of those aged 30 to 49 and just 28% of those below 30.

Beer has regained a comfortable margin over wine - when U.S. drinkers are asked to name which alcoholic beverage they most often drink. In recent years, wine had narrowed the gap, including pulling slightly ahead in 2005 beer still is not as widely preferred today as it was in the early 1990s, when close to half of Americans said it was their alcoholic drink of choice. Preferences for wine have fallen back from their 2005 high (39%) to 31%.

The shift back to beer from wine in recent years has occurred mostly among Americans between the ages of 30 and 49. In combined data from the 2004 and 2005 Consumption surveys, drinkers between 30 and 49 were about as likely to prefer wine as beer. Now, drinkers in this age bracket have shifted back to beer, with an average of 47% in the combined 2007-2008 data saying they most often drink beer.

For more information visit <http://www.Gallup.com>.



Unit-check website for students to be extended in UK

Health researchers at Leeds University have developed a website that encourages students to keep track of their drinking. The system seems to help reduce individual drinking levels and now is being rolled out to other universities.

'Unitcheck' encourages young people to check how many units they are consuming, how this

affects their health, and how their drinking compares with that of their peers. A pilot scheme funded by the European Research Advisory Board found people who used the site drank approximately one unit less on each occasion they drank, and that lower levels of alcohol consumption persisted over three months.

The site is now being funded by the Alcohol Education and Research Council and is being rolled out to four other universities. Leeds Primary Care Trust and the Institute of Health Sciences are also looking at how it could be modified and promoted to other groups. For more information, please visit <http://www.uniqoll.leeds.ac.uk/Unitcheck.htm>

WSWA promotes responsible tailgating



The Wine and Spirits Wholesalers of America (WSWA) has launched a new Consumer Outreach programme - TURF (Tailgaters Urging Responsibility and Fun). The programme runs in partnership with The Charmer Sunbelt Group and football legend Joe Theismann.

WSWA President and CEO Craig Wolf commented "Pregame tailgating is a football ritual. However, irresponsible behaviour affects everybody and addressing disorderly conduct is a responsibility of everyone. Through TURF WSWA has an opportunity to be part of the solution, which is consistent with our commitment to becoming the leading voice on responsible distribution of alcoholic beverages."

TURF also hosts a web site with tailgating tips for a successful and safe party with input from WSWA and The Charmer Sunbelt Group. "It is extremely important to The Charmer Sunbelt Group to protect the tailgating tradition by supporting zero tolerance for underage drinking and moderate consumption for fans 21 plus," said The Charmer Sunbelt Group Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Charles Merinoff. "With that in mind, we are proud to support TURF, and its messages of safe, fun and responsible tailgating."

For more information about TURF, visit www.turfzone.org and at www.wswa.org.

UK Transport Police appeal to football fans to drink responsibly

British Transport Police (BTP) has called on football fans using trains and stations to act responsibly during the coming season after a 10% increase in football related incidents last season across England, Wales and Scotland.

A total of 337 incidents were related to alcohol – up from 305 the previous year.

Alan Pacey, BTP's assistant chief constable, operations, said that, for the eighth season running, football related arrests increased – from 567 to 601 – and 122 football banning orders were secured and 25 police officers were assaulted.

A forum bringing together key rail industry groups, the FA, the Football League and Premier League, supporters associations and BTP has been set up to work through issues of concern and ensure the forthcoming season is a success.

"We would appeal to fans ahead of the new football season not to over indulge in alcohol and remind those coming into London to adhere to the ban on consumption of alcohol on the Tube, along with any other 'dry train' restrictions," said Mr Pacey.

12% of deaths among American Indians and Alaska Natives are alcohol-related

A US Federal report by the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, found 11.7% of deaths among American Indians and Alaska Natives between 2001 and 2005 were alcohol-related, compared with 3.3% for the U.S. as a whole.

Dwayne Jarman, a CDC epidemiologist who works for the Indian Health Service and is one of the study's authors, said it is the first national survey that measures American Indian deaths due to alcohol. The researchers obtained their statistics by analysing death certificates over the four-year period.

The two leading causes of alcohol-related deaths among Indians were traffic accidents and alcoholic liver disease, each of which cause more than a quarter of the 1,514 alcohol-related deaths over the four-year period. Also listed are homicide (6.6% of alcohol-related deaths),

suicide (5.2%) and injuries in falls (2.2%).

The greatest number of tribal alcohol-related deaths - about a third of the total - occurred in the Northern Plains, where reservations are remote and often destitute, the study said. The lowest number of deaths were in Alaska. The study said more than 68% of the Indians whose deaths were attributed to alcohol were men, and 66% were people younger than 50 years old. 7% were less than 20 years old. The study recommends "culturally appropriate clinical interventions" to reducing excessive drinking and better integration between tribal health care centres and tribal courts, which often deal with alcohol-related crimes.

For more information, please visit <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5734a3.htm>

Launch of caffeine alcoholic energy drink postponed

MillerCoors put on hold its plans to launch of 'Red Sparks', a new caffeine-infused alcoholic energy drink following pressure from 25 State Attorneys General. MillerCoors LLC said in a statement that it won't go ahead with the launch of the drink, previously scheduled for Oct. 1.

In a letter the attorneys general asked the company, a joint venture between SABMiller's U.S. unit and Molson Coors Brewing Co., to abandon its plans, citing health risks to young drinkers. It also argued that the new drink would have more alcohol than previous versions and that it "defies increasing undeniable evidence from medical and public health professionals about the dangers of mixing alcohol with stimulants found in energy drinks."

The group, argued that the combination of alcohol and caffeine reduces drinkers' sense of intoxication and therefore encourages greater alcohol consumption. The letter to MillerCoors Chief Executive Leo Kiely also hinted at a potential lawsuit if the product wasn't pulled.

Earlier in September The Center for Science in the Public Interest filed a suit against MillerCoors to stop the brewer from selling Sparks, saying that the drink is aimed at those under the legal drinking age. The suit with Superior Court of the District of Columbia said it is illegal to use caffeine, guarana, ginseng and taurine in alcoholic beverages, all of which are in Sparks products.

US middle-schoolers and alcohol: Tips for parents from the science inside alcohol project at AAAS

According to the AAAS alcohol project, the middle school years are crucial in the battle to prevent early alcohol use. Young adolescents' bodies and friendships are changing. They start pulling away from parents; yet seek out other adults for guidance. It's the most vulnerable time, specialists say, but also one of the last times they still can be influenced by adults.

"As parents better understand the physiological effects of alcohol on the body and the fact that their children might be starting younger, it can motivate them to have this sometimes awkward conversation," says Shirley Malcom, head of Education and Human Resources at AAAS. *"That's where the science can help."*

The Science Inside Alcohol Project is funded by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Members of The Science Inside Alcohol Project at AAAS are writing a book for middle school parents and developing an interactive Web-based science and health curriculum explaining how alcohol affects adolescents' brains and bodies. [The book is scheduled for publication in 2009].

Based on extensive research, the AAAS team suggests five steps parents can take to talk with their kids about alcohol.

Σ Find teachable moments. We live in a culture of celebrity. If a celebrity your child admires admits to a drinking problem, or an instance of alcohol abuse occurs in your community, talk about it. Ask your middle-school student if

he or she knows anyone who drinks alcohol and whether it is at parties or has been brought into their school. Answer questions. Have this conversation often.

Σ Talk to your kids when everything is fine. Middle school students are volatile, hormonal beings. They are sweet and wonderful one moment, and blow up the next. Pick a time when things are quiet and they're a captive audience such as in the backseat of your car. Don't take no for an answer.

Σ Engage your kids in the science of alcohol. Adolescents are incredibly self-involved. Alcohol can cause memory loss, impair sports performance, incite embarrassing behaviour and affect how they feel and look. Make them aware of these facts. If there is a history of alcoholism in your family, explain about genetic predispositions towards alcohol abuse.

Σ Be vigilant. There's no alternative to monitoring your kids. Have an early curfew. Know where they are at all times. Even if you are not home on a weeknight, make sure you can reach your kids by phone. Get to know their new friends and their parents. Find out what their rules and level of engagement are.

Σ Learn to trust your child. Now's the time when all the work you've put into creating a value system for your child begins to pay off. Set limits and enforce rules, but remember to give your child room to make his or her decisions, within your comfort zone. Praise them when they do well. It's worth a thousand words.

College presidents seek debate on drinking age

College presidents from about 100 of the nation's best-known universities, including Duke, Dartmouth and Ohio State, are calling on lawmakers to consider lowering the drinking age from 21 to 18, saying current laws actually encourage dangerous binge drinking on campus.

The movement called the Amethyst Initiative began recruiting presidents more than a year ago to provoke national debate about the drinking age.

"This is a law that is routinely evaded," said John McCardell, former president of Middlebury College in Vermont who started

the organisation. "It is a law that the people at whom it is directed believe is unjust and unfair and discriminatory."

Although the public phase of campaign has not yet begun, which may include publishing newspaper ads in the coming weeks, the college presidents are already facing sharp criticism.

The statement the presidents have signed avoids calling explicitly for a younger drinking age. Rather, it seeks "an informed and dispassionate debate" over the issue and the federal highway law that made 21 the de facto national drinking age by denying money to any state that bucks the trend.

But the statement makes clear the signers think the current law isn't working, citing a 'culture of dangerous, clandestine binge-drinking,' and noting that while adults under 21 can vote and enlist in the military, they 'are told they are not mature enough to have a beer.' Furthermore, 'by choosing to use fake IDs, students make ethical compromises that erode respect for the law.'

"I'm not sure where the dialogue will lead, but it's an important topic to American families and it deserves a straightforward dialogue," said William Trout, president of Rhodes College in Memphis, Tenn., who has signed the statement.

UMass claims success with social-norms campaign

The University of Massachusetts at Amherst says that binge drinking and overall heavy drinking have declined two years after the school launched a social-norms campaign to combat its "Zoo Mass" reputation as a party campus.

Using widespread advertising stating "We got the facts from you," the school is promoting the message that drinking is not as prevalent on campus as students tended to believe. Social-norms theory holds that the idea that behaviours like binge and underage drinking are common among peers tends to reinforce the behaviour. Some believe that UMass-Amherst's reputation as a party school attracts

more students who view heavy drinking as part of the college experience, compounding the problem.

The UMass social-norms campaign is linked to tougher regulation and enforcement of alcohol laws and regulations, as well as an expansion of prevention services. The school recently received a \$200,000 grant from the US Department of Education to expand and evaluate the programme.

"The perception is that heavy-drinking students are the norm," said Sally Linowski, director of the UMass-Amherst's Centre for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Prevention. "So some students

will drink to that expectation. Perception can become reality."

UMass-Amherst officials say that 68% of men and 58% of women at the school report binge drinking in the past two weeks, a 28% decline overall since 2003. Frequent heavy drinking (bingeing three or more times in the past two weeks) has declined 38%.

Also, a new study from the University of Virginia found that a social-norms campaign there helped cut alcohol-related injuries among students by 2,000 between 2001 and 2006, and helped reduce drunk-driving incidents by 1,511.

Source: reported in the Boston Globe, 25 August 2008

New Zealand booklet raises awareness of alcohol issues in older people

The Alcohol Advisory Council, (ALAC) and Age Concern have just released a booklet called Alcohol and Older People - Information for older people, family, friends and carers to highlight the potential dangers alcohol has for the 65+ age group.

Alcohol can affect some people differently as they grow older because the body changes how it processes alcohol. Also, the combination of alcohol and prescription medication can have a sedating effect that can lead to an increased risk of accidents and injury.

“New Zealanders who are over 65 have a one in three chance of having a fall each year. That rises to one in two when they reach 80. And the sad fact is that these falls often lead to a loss of independence or even death,” said Jennifer Brown, ACC’s manager of public safety programmes. “Caring for people in the 65+ age group who’ve had a fall costs New Zealanders around \$11 million each year, and that’s just the financial cost via ACC. There are of course very significant social

costs when people are hurt and not able to function in the same way. While some falls can be prevented by keeping active, tackling other contributing issues – such as alcohol – will help too.”

The booklet is aimed at older people as well as their family, friends and carers. It also offers tips for self-regulating alcohol consumption, such as:

- Noticing any increased effect that alcohol is having and adjust alcohol intake accordingly
- Checking with the doctor or pharmacist whether drinking alcohol is safe with prescribed and over-the-counter medication
- Working out a personal weekly limit and stick to it
- Having no more than two standard drinks a day with, or before, a meal
- Having at least two alcohol-free days each week
- Avoiding alcohol when feeling unwell, depressed, tired, or cold.

Copies of the resource can be ordered from ALAC’s web site www.alac.org.nz

Australia – Melbourne night club lockout

A three-month trial lockout affecting four inner Melbourne municipalities ended at the beginning of September. Under the lockout, patrons were not allowed enter or re-enter pubs and nightclubs after 2am.

Victorian Premier John Brumby has said that he is keeping an open mind about extending the lockout and is also considering other measures. The review would take into account police statistics on arrests, assaults and charges as well as hospital admissions he stated.

Mr Brumby said the onus was also on licensees to serve alcohol more responsibly and on revellers to show restraint. He said troublemakers were a minority and there were other measures in place to help clean up Melbourne’s streets, including more police, 24 hour bans on unruly patrons and a freeze on new liquor licences.

Venue operators have rallied against the lockout, with 120 winning exemptions.

Australian define intoxication guidelines

In New South Wales, the state’s Office of Liquor and Gaming have drawn up an official list of intoxication symptoms, so pub owners can tell when patrons are drunk. Among the 39 signs of intoxication are: “bumping into furniture”, “sleeping at a bar or table” and “inability to find one’s mouth with a glass”.

The intoxication guidelines, have been distributed to club and pub

managers. Staff are supposed to use them in determining when to refuse alcohol to patrons.

Drafted in response to tough new liquor laws introduced in NSW, the guidelines also recommend that clubs and pubs provide free food and bottled water to drinkers, in a bid to curb alcohol-related violence. Under the laws, managers are required to remove drunk patrons from the premises and stop them

from re-entering for 24 hours - or face an \$11,000 fine.

If a patron fails to leave, managers have been advised to contact police in order to avoid being fined.

The department said the guidelines were drafted to help bar staff form a reasonable belief that a person is intoxicated. However, it warned that the list was neither exhaustive nor conclusive.

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