

### Contents

(Click on an item/ page no. to be taken directly to your choice of article)

<b>News from around the world</b> .....	2	Cost of insurance for convicted drink drivers in the UK .....	22
Invitation to the presentation of evaluation findings for AET resources .....	3	RAC favour restricted driving licences for the young	
<b>Medical News</b>		Weekend road crashes drop after extended opening hours 'reduce binge-drinking'	
Alcohol consumption as a preventive factor for developing rheumatoid arthritis		Videos on 'alcohol and the family' & more	
Too many antioxidants? Resveratrol in pill form blocks many cardiovascular benefits of exercise .....	4	Introduction of late-night drinking levy .....	23
Early-onset dementia linked to alcohol abuse in young men		Independent audit finds 'overwhelming majority' of drinks packaging is responsible in the UK	
Graves hyperthyroidism and moderate alcohol consumption: evidence for disease prevention .....	5	Report of MRC and ESRC Workshop identifies target areas for future UK research opportunities	
Hangover impairs brain function		Parents urged to talk to their children about alcohol in pre-teen years .....	24
Alcohol consumption, heavy drinking, and mortality: Rethinking the J-shaped curve .....	6	Dorset police scheme to deal with alcohol-related offences	
Scientists discover new health-enhancing molecules in red wine		Pubs could face increased enforcement activity from police in 'week of action'	
Does moderate wine consumption lower the risk of developing depression? .....	7	Call for safer drinking levels for over 65s .....	25
Differences between wine and other alcoholic beverages in terms of adverse consequences of alcohol consumption .....	8	London Pharmacy IBA Scratch Card project	
Binge drinking impairs endothelial function in young people .....	11	Survey finds some parents allow their children to drink on family holiday	
Clustering of alcohol consumption with socioeconomic and biologic risk factors for cancer .....	14	Smoking, drinking and drug use among young people in England - 2012 .....	26
Alcohol dependence, binge eating, and compensatory behaviours .....	17	Network Rail release drink warning video	
Alcohol use in young adulthood: Do self-control and parents' perceptions of friends during adolescence modify peer influence?		Monitoring and Evaluating Scotland's Alcohol Strategy	
Gender-specific age, period and birth cohort effects on alcohol abstinence and consumption level for drinkers in Great Britain .....	18	Alcohol Sales Update .....	27
Investigating young Australian males' intentions to engage in recreational swimming while under the influence of alcohol		Scotland - Alcohol deaths down but levels remain high	
New evidence suggests impulsive adolescents more likely to drink heavily .....	19	Alcohol consumption during pregnancy down in Ireland	
Who pre-drinks before a night out and why? Socioeconomic status and motives behind young people's pre-drinking in the United Kingdom		Alcohol spend figures in Ireland	
Update of the UK government's alcohol policy .....	20	AFL's players to back anti-binge drinking message .....	28
Drink drive campaign raises awareness of the risks of driving 'the morning after' .....	21	NIH produces online course for teen alcohol screening	
UK Think campaign targets young males		More than a third of pedestrians killed in 2011 in the US had been drinking	
UK Drink-Drive deaths: good and bad news 2012		Drinkware that alerts user to tampered drink .....	29
		Diageo's Sustainability & Responsibility report 2013	
		Beer Institute releases 2012 State consumption ranking	
		Aware, Awake, Alive programme in the US	
		Washington State University imposes early-morning Friday classes to combat 'Thirsty Thursday' .....	30
		US tribe votes to end alcohol ban	
		Turkey to introduce warning labels on containers of alcohol	
		Taipei New laws result in fewer drunk driving fatalities	
		New Budweiser campaign backed by research on designated drivers .....	31
		Malta summer campaign against binge drinking	

**AIM Digest**  
**Frampton House**  
**Frampton, Dorchester**  
**Dorset DT2 9NH**  
 T: +44 (0)1300 320 869  
 E: [info@aim-digest.com](mailto:info@aim-digest.com)

**Websites:**

[www.alcoholinmoderation.com](http://www.alcoholinmoderation.com)  
[www.drinkingandyou.com](http://www.drinkingandyou.com)  
[www.talkaboutalcohol.com](http://www.talkaboutalcohol.com)  
[www.alcoholeducationtrust.org](http://www.alcoholeducationtrust.org)

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Please contact [Sherry.Webster@aim-digest.com](mailto:Sherry.Webster@aim-digest.com) for information about AIM's subscription levels.

Please make cheques/drafts in British pounds sterling, dollars or Euros payable to AIM Digest at the above address

Helena Conibear – **Executive Director**  
 T: +44 (0)1300 320 869  
 E: [helena.conibear@aim-digest.com](mailto:helena.conibear@aim-digest.com)

Alison Rees - **Editor**  
 E: [alison.rees@aim-digest.com](mailto:alison.rees@aim-digest.com)

Sherry Webster – **Finance and Subscriptions**

E: [sherry.webster@aim-digest.com](mailto:sherry.webster@aim-digest.com)

Jane Hutchings – **Alcohol Education Outreach**

E: [jane@alcoholeducationtrust.org](mailto:jane@alcoholeducationtrust.org)

Sandra Saint - **Parental Outreach Coordinator**

E: [Sandra@alcoholeducationtrust.org](mailto:Sandra@alcoholeducationtrust.org)

[www.alcoholeducationtrust.org](http://www.alcoholeducationtrust.org)  
[www.talkaboutalcohol.com](http://www.talkaboutalcohol.com)

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## Republic of Azerbaijan

The Parliament of the Republic of Azerbaijan is reportedly considering draft legislation prohibiting the use of celebrities in alcohol advertisements. The legislation would also prohibit the use of animated characters or animals in alcohol ads. The proposed changes are scheduled to be introduced in the plenary session of the autumn session of Parliament.

## Spain

Barcelona police are increasing efforts to curb illicit alcohol sales from unlicensed street vendors in the city's tourism zones. Critics of the sales point out that the untaxed beer sales place commercial pressures on legitimate alcohol vendors and also pose a health risk to consumers, as cans are often stored in sewer drains and trash bins to avoid police detection.

## Finland

Finland's Ministry of Social Affairs and Health issued a memorandum in August intended as the basis for revisions to alcohol legislation. Among the measures proposed are shorter sales hours, higher taxes on alcohol, and possibly lowering the permitted alcohol content of beers, ciders and pre-mixed drinks.

50-year-old drivers receiving a drink driving conviction could face insurance increases of 121%, while drivers between 60 and 70 years old could face an increase of 108%, and younger drivers could face an increase of 53%.

## Canada

The Toronto Police Department has launched 'Project Green Glasses', which will increase patrols in parks. People found with open containers of alcohol will be liable for a fine of up to CAD \$125. Opponents of the initiative say that officials should be targeting antisocial behaviour and noise disturbances, instead of responsible alcohol consumption in public parks.

## Latvia

Latvia has introduced health warning messages on all alcohol adverts that will now have to carry warnings a minimum of 10% of the whole advertisement. The warnings will relate to the law against the sale or supply of alcoholic drinks to young people. Advertising of alcohol at education and medical institutions, public transport and in magazines and newspapers will also be limited.

## France

France has officially replaced the English term "binge drinking" with the French alternative "beuverie express". The new phrase has been officially approved by France's General Commission of Terminology and Neology, a government body tasked with promoting the French language and protecting it from corruption by foreign words and phrases.

"Beuverie express" translates literally as "fast drinking" and is defined by the Commission as the "massive consumption of alcohol, usually as part of a group, designed to cause intoxication in a minimum amount of time".



## SAVE THE DATE

TALKABOUTALCOHOL.COM

31st October 2013, 4 - 6 pm  
House of Commons, Committee Room 15

*by kind invitation of*

The Rt Honourable Oliver Letwin MP  
Minister of State for Cabinet

**The Trustees of The Alcohol Education Trust invite you to a presentation of the evaluation findings of The Alcohol Education Trust resources by the National Foundation for Education Research among 4,000 13 - 14 year-olds in 34 schools across England, 2011 - 2013.**

In addition, Just A Few Drinks, 4 films commissioned by BBC Learning Zone, will be aired. The Learning Zone is BBC TWO's overnight service for schools. Just A Few Drinks aims to reveal to young people the risks they face by drinking too much alcohol. The films blend powerful oral testimonies delivered by four engaging young people with a scientific analysis of how alcohol affected their bodies and behaviours. The films were produced in consultation with The Alcohol Education Trust ([www.alcoholeducationtrust.org](http://www.alcoholeducationtrust.org)), one of the UK's leading charities supporting classroom teaching of alcohol education.

To register your interest, please email [jane@alcoholeducationtrust.org](mailto:jane@alcoholeducationtrust.org)

## Alcohol consumption as a preventive factor for developing rheumatoid arthritis

A paper published in The Annals of Rheumatic diseases summarises the evidence regarding the dose-response association between alcohol consumption and risk of rheumatoid arthritis (RA).

Studies were identified from search of MEDLINE, Embase and Web of Science databases between 1 January 1946 and 10 April 2013, and from review of the conference abstracts and the reference lists of retrieved articles.

Up to 10 April 2013, 8 prospective studies containing 195,029 participants and 1,878 RA cases were included. The results indicated that low to moderate alcohol consumption yielded a preventive effect on RA development (RR: 0.86; 95% CI 0.78 to 0.94), and provided some evidence of a non-linear relationship between alcohol consumption and risk of RA. Dose-response meta-analysis of the study data revealed that compared with that for no alcohol consumption, the adjusted RR was 0.93 (95% CI 0.88 to 0.98) for 3 g/day of alcohol consumption, 0.86 (95% CI 0.76 to

0.97) for 9 g/day, 0.88 (95% CI 0.78 to 0.99) for 12 g/day, 0.91 (95% CI 0.81 to 1.03) for 15 g/day, and 1.28 (95% CI 0.94 to 1.73) for 30 g/day. Subgroup analysis indicated that women who had low to moderate alcohol consumption had a 19% reduction in RA risk. Regardless of sex, a consistent low to moderate alcohol consumption for a period of at least 10 years was found to have a 17% reduction in RA risk.

The authors conclude that a low to moderate alcohol consumption is inversely associated with the development of RA in a manner that appears to be dose-dependent, time-dependent and sex-dependent. Large prospective studies that investigate gene-environment interactions are required to further clarify the aetiology of RA.

Source: Alcohol consumption as a preventive factor for developing rheumatoid arthritis: a dose-response meta-analysis of prospective studies. Zhichao Jin, Chun Xiang, Qing Cai, Xin Wei, Jia He. *Annals of Rheumatic Diseases* published online.

## Too many antioxidants? Resveratrol in pill form blocks many cardiovascular benefits of exercise

According to research published July 22 in *The Journal of Physiology*, high dose resveratrol supplements might block many of the cardiovascular benefits of exercise in older men.

The authors from the University of Copenhagen state that resveratrol (found naturally in red wine) has received widespread attention as a possible anti-aging compound and is now widely available as a dietary supplement; much has been made of its role in explaining the cardiovascular health benefits of red wine, and other foods. However, this research suggests that taking antioxidants in supplement rather than natural form may actually counteract many of the health benefits of exercise, including reduced blood pressure and cholesterol.

The study followed 27 healthy, physically inactive men around 65 years old for 8 weeks. During the 8 weeks all of the men performed high-intensity exercise training and half of the group received 250 mg of resveratrol daily, whereas the other group received a placebo pill (a pill containing no active ingredient). The study design was double-blinded, thus neither the subjects nor the investigators knew which participant that received either resveratrol or placebo.

It was found that exercise training was highly effective in improving cardiovascular health parameters, but resveratrol supplementation attenuated the positive

effects of training on several parameters including blood pressure, plasma lipid concentrations and maximal oxygen uptake.

Ylva Hellsten, the leader of the project, said: "We were surprised to find that resveratrol supplementation in aged men blunts the positive effects of exercise training on cardiovascular health parameters, in part because our results contradict findings in animal studies... It should be noted that the quantities of resveratrol given in our research study are much higher than what could be obtained by intake of natural foods."

The authors say that what is emerging is a new view that high dose antioxidants are not a fix for everything, and that some degree of oxidant stress may be necessary for the body to work correctly. This pivotal study suggests that reactive oxygen species, generally thought of as causing aging and disease, may be a necessary signal that causes healthy adaptations in response to stresses like exercise. So too much of a good thing (like antioxidants in the diet) may actually be detrimental to our health.

Source: Lasse Gliemann, JF Schmidt, J Olesen, RS Biensø, SLPeronard, SU Grandjean, SP Mortensen, M Nyberg, J Bangsbo, H Pilegaard,, Y Hellsten. Resveratrol Blunts the Positive Effects of Exercise Training on Cardiovascular Health in Aged Men. *JPHYSIOL*, 2013/258061

## Early-onset dementia linked to alcohol abuse in young men

Heavy chronic alcohol appears to be a risk factor for early-onset dementia (occurring before age 65) a large Swedish study published in *JAMA Internal Medicine* has found.

The study included 500,000 Swedish men who were followed for 37 years beginning at an average age of 18. Nine risk factors emerged for early-onset dementia. The study cohort was taken from the Swedish Military Service Conscription Register from January 1969 through to December 1971.

During a median follow-up of 37 years, 487 men were diagnosed as having YOD at a median age of 54 years. The nine significant risk factors for YOD (in descending order of importance) were alcohol intoxication (hazard ratio 4.82), stroke, use of antipsychotics depression father's dementia drug intoxication other

than alcohol, low cognitive function at conscription, low height at conscription, and high systolic blood pressure at conscription.

The population-attributable risk associated with all 9 risk factors was 68%. Men with at least 2 of these risk factors and in the lowest third of overall cognitive function were found to have a 20-fold increased risk of YOD during follow-up (hazard ratio, 20.38).

These risk factors were found to be multiplicative, but most were potentially modifiable, and the authors stress, most could be traced to adolescence, suggesting excellent opportunities for early prevention.

Source: Risk Factors in Late Adolescence for Young-Onset Dementia in Men: A Nationwide Cohort Study. P Nordström; A Nordström; M Eriksson; L Wahlund; Y Gustafson. *JAMA Intern Med*. Published online Aug 12, 2013.

## Graves hyperthyroidism and moderate alcohol consumption: evidence for disease prevention

A research team recently demonstrated that moderate alcohol consumption is associated with a considerable reduction in the risk of autoimmune hypothyroidism, similar to findings in other autoimmune diseases such as systemic lupus erythematosus and rheumatoid arthritis. In the current population-based, case-control study, the team aimed to study a possible association between alcohol intake and autoimmune Graves hyperthyroidism.

In a well-defined Danish population (2,027,208 person-years of observation), the researchers prospectively identified patients with new overt thyroid dysfunction and studied 272 patients with Graves hyperthyroidism. For each patient, they recruited four age-gender-region-matched controls with normal thyroid function (n=1088). Participants gave detailed information on current and previous alcohol intake as well as other factors to be used for analyses. The association between alcohol intake and development of hyperthyroidism was analysed.

Graves patients had a lower reported alcohol consumption than controls (median units of alcohol (12g) per week: 2 vs 4). In a multivariate regression

model, alcohol consumption was associated with a dose-dependent reduction in risk for development of overt Graves hyperthyroidism. Odds ratios (95% confidence interval) compared with the reference group with a past year consumption of 1-2 units of alcohol per week were as follows: 0 units/week 1.73 (1.17-2.56), 3-10 units/week 0.56 (0.39-0.79), 11-20 units/week 0.37 (0.21-0.65), 21 units/week 0.22 (0.08-0.60). Similar results were found for maximum previous alcohol consumption during a calendar year. No interaction was found with the type of alcohol consumed (wine vs beer), smoking habit, age, gender or region of inhabitancy.

The authors conclude that moderate alcohol consumption is associated with a considerable reduction in the risk of Graves disease with hyperthyroidism - irrespective of age and gender. They state that autoimmune thyroid disease seems to be much more dependent on environmental factors than hitherto anticipated.

Source: Graves hyperthyroidism and moderate alcohol consumption: evidence for disease prevention Carle A; Pedersen IB; Knudsen N; Perrild H; Ovesen L; Rasmussen LB; Jorgensen T; Laurberg P. *Clinical Endocrinology*. Vol 79, No 1, 2013, pp111-119.

## Hangover impairs brain function

New preliminary research conducted by researchers at the Keele University's school of psychology reveals that a hangover could also impair the way your brain retains and processes information. Scientists have found that a hangover can cause the brain to function at a much lower rate of efficiency. Alcohol can actually slow the pace of communication between the neurotransmitters in the brain that are necessary for brain information translation to the rest of the body.

Dr Lauren Owen, Marie Curie postdoctoral research fellow at Keele University's school of psychology said "Although numerous scientific papers cover the acute effects of alcohol consumption, researchers have largely neglected the issue of alcohol hangover".

Owen said that tasks such as mental arithmetic that depend on 'working memory' seem to be the most affected. 'Working Memory' oversees the way a brain holds and processes information.

The preliminary results revealed that performance of a working memory decreased by 5-10%. Slower response time (similar to someone in their 40s) and a 30% increase in errors was noticed when participants were hungover.

"We are measuring a large range of cognitive functions using a comprehensive battery of neuropsychological tests which will reveal the associated brain functions that may be impaired. The findings are preliminary, but so far we are observing that tasks that rely on what psychologists call 'working memory' seem to be most reliably affected", Owen said.

"So far we have found there are statistically significant differences on these tasks compared to the 'no alcohol' condition however the magnitude will not be fully apparent until all the data is in."

The findings of the study were presented at the 5th Annual Meeting of the Alcohol Hangover Research Group, Thu 1st - Fri 2nd August 2013.

## Alcohol consumption, heavy drinking, and mortality: Rethinking the J-shaped curve

Authors of a research published in *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research* state that high average daily consumption of alcohol has been associated with elevated mortality risk, but more moderate consumption, relative to abstinence, has been associated with reduced mortality risk. However, average daily consumption can be complicated to assess, limiting its usefulness in both research and clinical practice. There are also concerns that average consumption fails to capture the risk associated with certain drinking patterns, such as heavy episodic drinking. This study assessed mortality associated with drinking pattern.

National Health Interview Survey Data from the 1997 to 2001 (NHIS; n = 111,511) were paired with the current release of the NHIS Linked Mortality Files, which provided mortality follow-up data through to the end of 2006. The researchers estimated the impact of drinking pattern on all-cause mortality, relative to the frequency of heavy (5+ drinks) and nonheavy (<5 drinks) drinking occasions. Other covariates in the model included survey wave, sex, age, race/ethnicity, ratio of family income to poverty threshold, educational attainment, body mass index, and smoking status.

Over a third of past-year drinkers reported heavy drinking. Mortality risk increased steadily as heavy drinking frequency increased; daily heavy drinkers exhibited an almost 2-fold risk of death compared with abstainers ( $p < 0.001$ ). Regular nonheavy drinking was associated with decreased mortality, similar to the "J-shaped curve" highlighted in past research on alcohol mortality; this potential protective effect peaked around 2 nonheavy occasions per week.

The authors conclude that any heavy drinking likely elevates mortality risk, and substantial health benefits could be realized by reducing heavy drinking occasions or limiting overall drinking. Heavy and nonheavy drinking frequencies are valid targets for clinical screening and could be helpful in assessing risk and promoting less harmful drinking behaviour.

Source: *Alcohol Consumption, Heavy Drinking, and Mortality: Rethinking the J-Shaped Curve*. Andrew D. Plunk, Husham Syed-Mohammed, Patricia Cavazos-Rehg, Laura J. Bierut, Richard A. Grucza. Article first published online: 27 August 2013.

## Scientists discover new health-enhancing molecules in red wine

Stilbenoids are secondary plant metabolites responsible for the protection of multiple plant species including grape vine from bacterial and fungal infection. Red wine has been shown to be a major source of these compounds in the human diet, where they display an array of health benefits.

Chemists from the University of British Columbia's Okanagan campus in Canada have provided a more complete profile of the stilbenoids present in red wine, detecting 41 stilbenoid compounds, 23 of which have never before been detected in red wine, which they think could lead to medical breakthroughs in the future.

"These new molecules are likely to have very interesting biological properties and may contribute to the benefits from drinking red wine", said Associate Professor Cédric Saucier, who runs the enology laboratory at UBC's Okanagan campus and made the discovery in partnership with researchers from Australia's University of Adelaide.

The discovery was made by concentrating red wine extract and separating the compounds so that the researchers could examine and create a fingerprint of each one individually.

The 23 newly discovered molecules are related to resveratrol, a chemical found naturally in the skin of red grapes and known to have a potential impact on age-related human diseases.

Now the scientists say they face 'many more years' of research, analysing and assessing each of the new stilbenoid compounds.

Source: *Investigation of monomeric and oligomeric wine stilbenoids in red wines by ultra-high-performance liquid chromatography/electrospray ionization quadrupole time-of-flight mass spectrometry*. Moss R, Mao Q, Taylor D, Saucier C. *Rapid Commun Mass Spectrom*. 2013 Aug 30;27(16):1815-27. doi: 10.1002/rcm.6636.

## Does moderate wine consumption lower the risk of developing depression?

Gea A, Beunza JJ, Estruch R, et al (17 authors). Alcohol intake, wine consumption and the development of depression: the PREDIMED study. *BMC Medicine* 2013. Advanced publication, released 29 August 2013.

### Authors' Abstract

**Background:** Alcoholic beverages are widely consumed. Depression, the most prevalent mental disorder worldwide, has been related to alcohol intake. We aimed to prospectively assess the association between alcohol intake and incident depression using repeated measurements of alcohol intake.

**Methods:** We followed-up 5,505 high-risk men and women (55 to 80 y) of the PREDIMED Trial for up to seven years. Participants were initially free of depression or a history of depression, and did not have any history of alcohol-related problems. A 137-item validated food frequency questionnaire administered by a dietician was repeated annually to assess alcohol intake. Participants were classified as incident cases of depression when they reported a new clinical diagnosis of depression, and/or initiated the use of antidepressant drugs. Cox regression analyses were fitted over 23,655 person-years.

**Results:** Moderate alcohol intake within the range of 5 to 15 g/day was significantly associated with lower risk of incident depression (hazard ratio (HR) and 95% confidence interval (95% CI) = 0.72 (0.53 to 0.98) versus abstainers). Specifically, wine consumption in the range of two to seven drinks/week was significantly associated with lower rates of depression (HR (95% CI) = 0.68 (0.47 to 0.98)).

**Conclusions:** Moderate consumption of wine may reduce the incidence of depression, while heavy drinkers seem to be at higher risk.

### Forum Comments

(It is noted that two of the 17 authors of this paper are members of this Forum. They have not provided any comments for this critique.)

This appears to be a well-done analysis of the relation of moderate drinking with depression among adult subjects at high-risk of cardiovascular disease. There were appropriate restrictions to entry into the study cohort and important sensitivity analyses were carried out. The analyses are based almost exclusively on "moderate" drinkers, as people exceeding certain amounts of alcohol or testing positive on the CAGE questionnaire (a measure of alcohol misuse) were excluded.

It was a large prospective study, based on data from more than 5,000 55-80 years old subjects who were

followed for up to 7 years for the initial development of depression. A total of 443 subjects had a clinical diagnosis of depression made or began to use anti-depressive medications during follow up. The subjects in this study were at increased risk of cardiovascular disease due to diabetes (about one-half of participants) or other risk factors. Essentially all were primarily wine drinkers.

There were repeated assessments of alcohol consumption, every two years, with the development of depression only within the second year after each alcohol assessment counted (to prevent reverse causation). A rather complete list of potentially confounding variables was available. In sensitivity analyses, the authors evaluated lifetime non-drinkers vs current non-drinkers, men vs women, subjects by age groups, excluding diabetics, etc. Only the latter (diabetes) changed the estimates of effect. The key findings were that subjects reporting >5-15 grams/day of total alcohol intake, and wine drinkers of 2-7 drinks/week, were at a lower risk of developing depression than were non-drinkers.

**Specific Comments by Forum Reviewers:** Forum reviewers were impressed by many aspects of this study: the large sample size, the repeated assessments of alcohol intake, appropriate analytic techniques. They thought that being able to provide updated alcohol/wine consumption estimates added to the importance of the study, especially since heavy drinking can lead to depression, and depression can get people to start to drink heavily. Reviewer Svilaas stated: "The strength of the study is the high number of participants, that it is prospective, and that annually a long and complete food frequency questionnaire was used. This should have provided very reliable estimates of alcohol intake."

Forum members appreciated that this study does not provide data to judge the effects of alcohol misuse and depression, as most heavy drinkers were excluded. Instead, it provides valuable data on the relation of moderate drinking, especially of wine, to the development of depression.

Some Forum members did not think that the analyses necessarily supported the conclusions of the authors that moderate drinking lowers the risk of depression. Said Reviewer Finkel: "I cannot support the statements of the authors of a physiological parallel between

cardiovascular disease and depressive disease in their relationships to drinking. Further, drinking is often a symptom of depression, likely an attempt at self-medication, and drawing a deeper significance from the conflation of the two seems to me untenable.”

Reviewer Van Velden thought that this was a well-done study, but believed that it is difficult to eliminate possible confounders. “Moderate alcohol drinkers may be healthier and happier than heavy drinkers. A healthy lifestyle, where moderate alcohol consumption is a part of life, may be the possible explanation for the lower incidence of depression.”

Forum member De Gaetano stated: “Depression is a delicate matter and moderate wine consumption in a Mediterranean Country is difficult to dissociate from the population’s dietary habits. Thus the role of possible confounders remains potentially high. Possibly, one might conclude that moderate wine consumption, in the context of a Mediterranean-Diet dietary habit, is associated with lower incidence of depression.”

### Forum Summary

There is a large literature relating heavy alcohol consumption to depression: most studies show that heavy drinkers tend to be depressed, and depressed people may self-medicate with large amounts of alcohol. This large prospective study of subjects at high risk of cardiovascular disease has shown that “moderate” drinkers, especially wine drinkers (the majority of their subjects), were at lower risk of developing depression during 7 years of follow up than were non-drinkers. An important aspect of this study is indeed that the analyses were based on moderate drinkers, as people exceeding certain amounts of alcohol or testing positive on the CAGE questionnaire (a measure of alcohol misuse) were excluded.

Strengths of the study include it being a large prospective study, with more than 5,000 subjects,

aged 55-80 years at baseline, who were followed for up to 7 years for the initial development of clinical depression (which was diagnosed in 443 instances). Especially important was the ability of the investigators to have repeated assessments of alcohol consumption, every two years. A rather complete list of potentially confounding variables was available. The key findings of the study were that subjects reporting >5-15 grams/day of total alcohol intake, and wine drinkers of 2-7 drinks/week, were at a lower risk of developing depression than were non drinkers.

Some Forum members remained concerned that there may have been residual confounding by other lifestyle habits, and that the results may apply primarily to subjects who are also following a Mediterranean-type diet and lifestyle. Also, data were not available to evaluate the relation of heavy drinking or alcoholism to depression. However, the authors provide good scientific support for their conclusions that subjects reporting >5-15 grams/day of total alcohol intake (from about  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  of a typical drink), and wine drinkers of 2-7 drinks/week, are at approximately 30% lower risk of developing depression than are abstainers of alcohol.

Comments on this paper were provided by the following members of the International Scientific Forum on Alcohol Research:

Harvey Finkel, MD, Hematology/Oncology, Boston University Medical Center, Boston, MA, USA

Erik Skovenborg, MD, Scandinavian Medical Alcohol Board, Practitioner, Aarhus, Denmark

Giovanni de Gaetano, MD, PhD, Department of Epidemiology and Prevention, IRCCS Istituto Neurologico Mediterraneo NEUROMED, Pozzilli, Italy

Arne Svilaas, MD, PhD, general practice and lipidology, Oslo University Hospital, Oslo, Norway

David Van Velden, MD, Dept. of Pathology, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, South Africa

R. Curtis Ellison, MD, Section of Preventive Medicine & Epidemiology, Boston University School of Medicine, Boston, MA, USA

## Differences between wine and other alcoholic beverages in terms of adverse consequences of alcohol consumption

Dey M, Gmel G, Studer J, Dermota P, Mohler-Kuo M. Beverage preferences and associated drinking patterns, consequences and other substance use behaviours. *European Journal of Public Health* 2013; advance access; doi:10.1093/eurpub/ckt109

### Authors' Abstract

**Background:** Studies about beverage preferences in a country in which wine drinking is relatively widespread (like Switzerland) are scarce. Therefore, the main aims of the present study were to examine the associations between beverage preferences and drinking patterns, alcohol-related consequences and the use of other substances among Swiss young men.

**Methods:** The analytical sample consisted of 5399 Swiss men who participated in the Cohort Study on Substance Use Risk Factors (C-SURF) and had been drinking alcohol over the preceding 12 months. Logistic regression analyses were conducted to study the associations between preference for a particular beverage and (i) drinking patterns, (ii) negative alcohol-related consequences and (iii) the (at-risk) use of cigarettes, cannabis and other illicit drugs.

**Results:** Preference for beer was associated with risky drinking patterns and, comparable with a preference for strong alcohol, with the use of illicit substances (cannabis and other illicit drugs). In contrast, a preference for wine was associated with low-risk alcohol consumption and a reduced likelihood of experiencing at least four negative alcohol-related consequences or of daily cigarette smoking. Furthermore, the likelihood of negative outcomes (alcohol-related consequences; use of other substances) increased among people with risky drinking behaviours, independent of beverage preference.

**Conclusions:** In our survey, beer preference was associated with risky drinking patterns and illicit drug use. Alcohol policies to prevent large quantities of alcohol consumption, especially of cheaper spirits like beer, should be considered to reduce total alcohol consumption and the negative consequences associated with these beverage types.

### Forum Comments

The present study was based on questionnaire data related to alcohol intake that were obtained from just over one half of military conscripts from the general population who were invited to participate. Their average age was just over 19 years. "Risky single occasion drinking" (RSOD) was defined as consuming at least six standard drinks (10-12 g of alcohol/drink), and "At risk RSOD" was defined as risky drinking episodes at least once a month. Beverage

preference was based on reporting that 2/3rds or more of the total intake of a subject came from one type of beverage. The intake of aperitifs, alcopops, beer pops, wine pops, chillers, and coolers were all classified as "other preferences." Overall, 31.7% preferred beer, 5.4% preferred wine, and 11.5% had "other preferences."

Only 0.3% of subjects reported an average intake of > 21 drinks/week. Hence, these young subjects were primarily light drinkers or "binge" drinkers.

Many previous studies have shown healthier outcomes associated with the consumption of wine than of other alcoholic beverages. Such beneficial effects are generally attributed both to the polyphenols and other constituents of wine, other than alcohol, as well as to the drinking pattern and more moderate other lifestyle factors of wine consumers.

To some extent, the present study supports such findings, as the risk of most adverse alcohol-related consequences (e.g., blackouts, accidents, unprotected sex, encounters with police) were much less likely among men in whom two-thirds or more of their total alcohol consumption was from wine than from other beverages. Beer drinkers were more frequently binge drinkers. Smoking (both cigarettes and cannabis) and the use of illicit drugs were much less common among wine drinkers than either beer drinkers or those with other preferences. However, more frequent binge drinking, of any beverage, strongly related to an increase in adverse alcohol-related consequences.

Reviewer Finkel commented: "Nothing new here: young men, especially in the company of other young people, engage in risky behaviour more than us more boring beings. Ever shall it be. I agree that the support of this study may help enable more sensible programs and legislation, but it will be difficult to persuade the rule makers that wine should be treated differently from other beverages. (Probably we should focus on treating young brains.)"

Forum member Skovenborg agreed: "Not much to learn from this study with cross-sectional data from a Swiss cohort study. As the authors acknowledge, men with a preference for beer and strong alcohol

belong to a particular subculture that demonstrates problematic substance use due to personal characteristics. No causal inferences may be drawn due to lack of longitudinal data.” Skovenborg continued: “I am not sure why the authors suggest an attempt to reduce total alcohol intake in this group of young men, where consumption of more than 21 drinks per week occurred rarely. The essential problem is at risk binge drinking. To curb the binge drinking pattern of this group of young men with a price increase might work, however, even the illegal status of cannabis and other illicit drugs has not been able to stop such drug use.”

Implications of the results of this study for setting alcohol policy: Forum reviewer Ursini had some interesting observations: “The authors suggest that in order to decrease the ‘negative consequences’ of alcohol intake (the reference to the use of cannabis and illicit drugs is straightforward), alcohol policy must aim to prevent, with highest priority, the consumption of the beer just because it is ‘cheap.’ As a matter of fact the same results could be obtained by increasing the price of either beer (possibly welcome in terms of Governmental taxes) or of illicit drugs (but this would be inappropriate and definitely out of the Governmental control). The other option (the most desirable) would be increasing the richness of young people that in this way would be “protected” from the use of illicit drugs, while drinking –in moderation- the most expensive wines and spirits.”

The authors suggest that the data from this study may be useful when planning programs for reducing alcohol misuse. They state specifically that while preventive strategies should attempt to reduce excessive drinking of all types of beverages, “to lessen the additional negative effects of beer and strong alcohol, which are particularly cheap in Switzerland, targeted strategies such as minimum pricing policies for these beverage types should be considered.” In the opinion of Forum members, it is yet to be shown the extent to which such price restructuring would decrease unhealthy drinking practices among young people.

### Forum Summary

Questionnaire-based data on alcohol consumption were collected from more than 5,000 military recruits in Switzerland, who had a mean age of just over 19 years. There were very few drinkers who averaged

more than 21 drinks/week, so the emphasis was on the effects of what is usually referred to as “binge drinking,” defined in this study as the consumption of 6 or more typical drinks (a drink containing 10-12 g of alcohol) on a single occasion. The “preference” of one particular type of beverage was based on the subject indicating that it made up more than two-thirds of his total alcohol consumption. The specific type of beverage preferred — beer, wine, or “other beverages” (the latter including aperitifs, “pops,” chillers, and coolers) — was related to the pattern of drinking (frequency of binge drinking) and to the reported occurrence of adverse alcohol-related consequences (e.g., blackouts, driving after heavy drinking, missing work due to drinking, accidents, unprotected sex, encounters with police).

The authors report: “Preference for beer was associated with risky drinking patterns and, comparable with a preference for strong alcohol, with the use of illicit substances (cannabis and other illicit drugs). In contrast, a preference for wine was associated with low-risk alcohol consumption and a reduced likelihood of experiencing at least four negative alcohol-related consequences or of daily cigarette smoking.” More frequent binge drinking of any beverage was strongly associated with an increase in adverse alcohol-related consequences.

Forum reviewers thought that the adverse outcomes, especially those related to heavy beer intake, tend to characterize a particular subculture that demonstrates problematic substance use due to personal characteristics of the subjects. The unhealthy outcomes may be a feature more of the cultural habits of the subjects rather than just due to the type of beverage they consume most frequently.

The authors conclude that strategies for preventing problems with alcohol abuse should attempt to reduce excessive drinking of all types of beverages. However, they add: “to lessen the additional negative effects of beer and strong alcohol, which are particularly cheap in Switzerland, targeted strategies such as minimum pricing policies for these beverage types should be considered.” Forum members think that the extent to which such beverage-specific price restructuring would decrease unhealthy drinking practices among young people remains unclear

**Comments on the critique of this paper were provided by the following members of the International Scientific Forum on Alcohol Research:**

Harvey Finkel, MD, Hematology/Oncology, Boston University Medical Center, Boston, MA, USA

Erik Skovenborg, MD, Scandinavian Medical Alcohol Board, Practitioner, Aarhus, Denmark

Fulvio Ursini, MD, Dept. of Biological Chemistry, University of Padova, Padova, Italy

Arduino A. Mangoni, PhD, Strategic Professor of Clinical Pharmacology and Senior Consultant in Clinical Pharmacology and Internal Medicine, Department of Clinical Pharmacology, Flinders University, Bedford Park, SA; Australia

R. Curtis Ellison, MD, Section of Preventive Medicine & Epidemiology, Boston University School of Medicine, Boston, MA, USA.

## Binge drinking impairs endothelial function in young people

Goslowski M, Piano MR, Bian J-T, Church EC, Szczurek M, Phillips SA. Binge drinking impairs vascular function in young adults. *J Am Coll Cardiol* 2013;62:201–207.

### Authors' Abstract

**Objectives** The aim of this study was to assess whether young binge drinkers (BD) have impaired macrovascular and microvascular function and cardiovascular disease risk factors compared with age-matched alcohol abstainers (A).

**Background** Binge drinking rates are highest on college campuses and among those age 18 to 25 years; however, macrovascular and microvascular endothelial function in young adults with histories of repeated binge drinking ( $\geq 5$  standard drinks in 2 h in men,  $\geq 4$  standard drinks in 2 h in women) has not been investigated.

**Methods** Cardiovascular profiles, brachial artery endothelial-dependent flow-mediated dilation (FMD), and flow-independent nitroglycerin (NTG)-mediated dilation and vasoreactivity of resistance arteries (isolated from gluteal fat biopsies) were evaluated in A and BD.

**Results** Men and women (18 to 25 years of age; A,  $n = 17$ ; BD,  $n = 19$ ) were enrolled. In the BD group, past-month mean number of binge episodes was  $6 \pm 1$ , and the mean duration of binge drinking behavior was  $4 \pm 0.6$  years. FMD and NTG-mediated dilation were significantly lower in the BD group (FMD:  $8.4 \pm 0.7\%$ ,  $p = 0.022$ ; NTG-mediated dilation:  $19.6 \pm 2\%$ ,  $p = 0.009$ ) than in the A group (FMD:  $11 \pm 0.7\%$ ; NTG-mediated dilation:  $28.6 \pm 2\%$ ). Acetylcholine-induced and sodium nitroprusside-induced dilation in resistance arteries was not significantly different between the A and BD groups. However, endothelin-1-induced constriction was significantly enhanced in the BD group compared with the A group ( $p = 0.032$ ). No differences between groups were found in blood pressure, lipoproteins, and C-reactive protein.

**Conclusions** Alterations in the macrocirculation and microcirculation may represent early clinical manifestations of cardiovascular risk in otherwise healthy young BD. This study has important clinical implications for screening young adults for a repeated history of binge drinking.

### Forum Comments

The function of the vascular endothelium is a key process in the development of atherosclerosis and coronary heart disease. Most studies of the effects of alcohol consumption on endothelial function have been carried out among middle-aged or older adults, and generally show that moderate drinking improves function, whereas binge drinking decreases function. Whether or not alcohol consumption among young people has any lasting biological effects on cardiovascular risk is unclear: risk factors tend to track from childhood into adulthood, but specific long-lasting effects related only to drinking in young people are not known. Hence, data are currently not available to answer the question as to when during life people might consider beginning the moderate consumption of alcohol for the potential lowering of cardiovascular risk later in life. The present study does not answer that question, as it only compares abstaining young people with binge drinkers, and does not compare abstainers with moderate drinkers (perhaps since few young people are regular moderate drinkers).

In this study, binge drinkers were defined as males reporting that they consumed  $\geq 5$  typical drinks in 2 hours or females reporting consuming  $\geq 4$  typical drinks in 2 hours; the average number of binge-drinking episodes among these subjects was  $6 \pm 1$  episodes in the past month. The paper concludes that binge drinking among 18–25 year olds has clear adverse effects on endothelial function.

Specific comments by Forum members: This is not a large study, and the low numbers tend to limit the usefulness of p-values to determine effect (or lack of effect). The investigators estimated macrovascular dysfunction through studying brachial artery endothelium-dependent and endothelium-independent dilation, which is the standard approach

for its assessment. They used vascular function assessed in vitro in arteries obtained from subjects through gluteal fat pad biopsies as an estimate of microvascular effect.

The authors conclude that their study showed adverse effects on both microvascular and macrovascular function to be associated with frequent binge drinking in young people. It is hoped that the investigators in this study, or others, will provide data on the effects on vascular function of regular, moderate alcohol consumption among young people, and to determine how long such effects persist, with or without continued alcohol intake.

Forum member Finkel stated that he had long thought it “unwise to focus attention only on the vasculature of middle-aged and older individuals when we know that atherosclerosis starts in the young; beginning with pathological studies of very young soldiers during the Korean War, we’ve had ample evidence of this. If atherosclerosis begins so early, and gets to be clinically evident only years later, it should be important to prevent its development and progression starting early. I therefore welcome this paper, which also serves to focus attention on two other vital issues: the evils of binge drinking and the central role of the blood vessels.”

Forum member Goldfinger also had comments: “Firstly, the methodology used by these investigators was ambitious and should be lauded, as it reflects a comprehensive assessment of vascular responsiveness in both groups. Both groups demonstrated a (+) FMD, the non-bingers more so than the bingers. Thus both had a normal response. In subjects with atherogenic risk factors or frank atherosclerotic disease, we usually see no vasodilation and in fact, inappropriate vasoconstriction in response to endothelial stimulation (FMD). I am not aware that a less robust, albeit normal response, is in fact a notable difference. The same is true for NTG response (endothelial independent). The subtle suggestion that binge drinkers may have stiffer arteries is an opinion based on these data . . . but may, in fact, be true. Both groups had a normal response, and I believe that is all that can be said here.

“The difference regarding endothelin production is novel. This may be an important observation that can explain the paradox of why heavy alcohol

drinkers may have accelerated atherosclerosis. In general NO production is favorable even with higher levels of alcohol (specifically – actually exclusively — with wine consumption). ETOH itself has been shown repeatedly by my group and others not to alter FMD significantly. It may be that not the lesser vasodilation potential, but the enhanced vasoconstriction potential hurts binge drinkers. Of course, what needs to be considered is that college students are less likely wine drinkers and typically rather consumers of beer and inexpensive spirits.”

An invited comment from Professor Roger Corder stated that he “was not convinced that the groups were adequately matched. The isolated vessel studies have only been conducted on a proportion of the two groups, so these results may not be entirely representative. There is no analysis of the effect of sex or ethnicity confounders on the isolated vessel responses.” Reviewer de Gaetano was also concerned about inadequate adjustment of potential confounders. He points out that “the authors acknowledge that their study was cross-sectional: it would be interesting to know if the described effects of binge drinking are permanent or reversible, and in the latter case after how long they are reversed following the last bingeing episode. Otherwise, the implications of these data for atherosclerosis development in older age would be rather weak.” He added: “It would also be interesting to see whether wine or gin binge drinking would have the same effects on vascular function.”

Reviewer Djoussé stated: “This is an interesting paper in support of adverse effects of binge drinking on vascular function in young people, but the study design precludes a firm conclusion. For example, residual confounding by other characteristics associated with binge drinking in young adults could have led to an overestimation of the effect of binge drinking on flow mediated dilation (FMD). Matching on age alone does not appear to be sufficient to address this concern. Poor response of FMD on nitroglycerine in binge drinkers compared to abstainers could be partially explained by imbalanced distribution of risk factors for endothelial dysfunction between the two groups.”

Reviewer Skovenborg stressed that “the long time consequences of temporarily impaired FMD in young adults are unknown. Further, the study is

cross-sectional and confounding may be present; for example, no information on food intake before or together with alcohol intake is given." He added that while most studies show adverse vascular effects of binge drinking, other studies (e.g., Skov-Ettrup et al, 2011) have not demonstrated an effect of binge drinking on the risk of ischemic heart disease.

Reference from Forum critique: Skov-Ettrup LS, Eliassen M, Ekholm O, Grønbaek M, Tolstrup JS. Binge drinking, drinking frequency, and risk of ischaemic heart disease: A population-based cohort study. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health* 2011;39:880–887.

### Forum Summary

The function of the vascular endothelium is a key process in the development of atherosclerosis and coronary heart disease, and extensive studies among middle-aged and elderly adults generally show beneficial effects of moderate drinking on vascular function. Whether or not alcohol consumption among young people has any lasting biological effects on cardiovascular risk is unclear: risk factors tend to track from childhood into adulthood, but specific long-lasting effects related only to drinking in young people are not known. Hence, data are currently not available to answer the question as to when during life people might consider beginning the moderate consumption of alcohol for the potential lowering of cardiovascular risk later in life.

The present study does not answer that question, as it only compares abstaining young people with binge drinkers, with the latter being defined as subjects reporting that they consumed  $\geq 5$  drinks in 2 hours for males, and  $\geq 4$  drinks in 2 hours for females. (The average number of binge-drinking episodes for these subjects was  $6 \pm 1$  within the past month.) It does not compare abstainers with moderate drinkers. However, the paper does show that binge drinking among 18 – 25 year olds has adverse effects on endothelial function.

Forum reviewers were pleased to see this study, but point out that it is a cross-sectional analysis, and only compares binge drinkers with non-drinking young people. Further, inadequate data are presented to know the degree to which the results of the study may suffer from residual confounding from other factors.

The authors conclude that their study showed adverse effects on both microvascular and macrovascular function to be associated with frequent binge drinking in young people. It is hoped that these investigators, or others, will in the future provide data on the effects on vascular function of regular, moderate alcohol consumption among young people. It would also be interesting to learn if effects are different for high-polyphenol wine than for other beverages. Further, it will be important to determine how long beneficial or adverse effects on vascular function may persist, with or without continued alcohol intake.

Comments on this paper were provided by the following members of the International Scientific Forum on Alcohol Research:

Luc Djoussé, MD, DSc, Dept. of Medicine, Division of Aging, Brigham & Women's Hospital and Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA, USA

Erik Skovenborg, MD, Scandinavian Medical Alcohol Board, Practitioner, Aarhus, Denmark

Creina Stockley, PhD, MBA, Clinical Pharmacology, Health and Regulatory Information Manager, Australian Wine Research Institute, Glen Osmond, South Australia, Australia

Harvey Finkel, MD, Hematology/Oncology, Boston University Medical Center, Boston, MA, USA

Pierre-Louis Teissedre, PhD, Faculty of Oenology – ISVV, University Victor Segalen Bordeaux 2, Bordeaux, France

Arne Svilaas, MD, PhD, general practice and lipidology, Oslo University Hospital, Oslo, Norway

Imke Janssen, PhD, Department of Preventive Medicine, Rush University Medical Centre, Chicago, IL, USA

Dag S. Thelle, MD, PhD, Senior Professor of Cardiovascular Epidemiology and Prevention, University of Gothenburg, Sweden; Senior Professor of Quantitative Medicine at the University of Oslo, Norway

Tedd Goldfinger, DO, FACC, Desert Cardiology of Tucson Heart Center, Dept. of Cardiology, University of Arizona School of Medicine, Tucson, Arizona, USA

Giovanni de Gaetano, MD, PhD, Department of Epidemiology and Prevention, IRCCS Istituto Neurologico Mediterraneo NEUROMED, Pozzilli, Italy

R. Curtis Ellison, MD, Section of Preventive Medicine & Epidemiology, Boston University School of Medicine, Boston, MA, USA

Also, this critique includes an invited commentary from Roger Corder, PhD, MRPharmS, William Harvey Research Institute, Queen Mary University of London, UK

## Clustering of alcohol consumption with socioeconomic and biologic risk factors for cancer

Touvier M, Druesne-Pecollo N, Kesse-Guyot E, Andreeva VA, Galan P, Hercberg S, Latino-Martel P. Demographic, socioeconomic, disease history, dietary and lifestyle cancer risk factors associated with alcohol consumption. *Int J Cancer* 2013.

### Authors' Abstract

Data are lacking regarding the association of alcohol consumption with a broad range of other cancer risk factors.

The objectives were: (1) to assess which sociodemographic, lifestyle and dietary factors were associated with alcohol consumption; (2) to identify profiles of alcohol consumers by beverage type; (3) to estimate the number of cancer risk factors accumulated on the individual level according to alcohol consumption.

Alcohol and dietary intakes were assessed by six 24 h records among 29,566 adults of the NutriNet-Sante cohort. Factors associated with alcohol consumption: non-drinkers (reference)/<10g/d/≥10g/d) were assessed by polytomous multivariate logistic regression stratified by gender. Among alcohol consumers, percentages of alcohol brought by each beverage type were compared across sociodemographic and lifestyle characteristics using Kruskal-Wallis rank tests.

Several factors were associated with alcohol consumption ≥10g/d in both genders: older age ( $P_{men}=0.02$ ,  $P_{women}<0.0001$ ), smoking ( $P_{men\&women}<0.0001$ ), higher socioprofessional category ( $P_{men\&women}<0.0001$ ), higher income ( $P_{men}=0.003$ ,  $P_{women}<0.0001$ ), and less healthy dietary intakes. Profiles of subjects varied across alcoholic beverage types. Men with history of cardiovascular disease ( $P=0.0002$ ) or depression ( $P=0.03$ ) and women with history of cirrhosis ( $P<0.0001$ ) consumed less alcohol. In women, personal history of cancer was associated with a lower proportion of moderate alcohol users only (<10g/d,  $P=0.04$ ).

In both genders, higher alcohol drinkers clustered more cancer risk factors (median=5, apart from alcohol) than non-drinkers (median=4),  $P<0.0001$ . The multiplicity of deleterious lifestyle behaviours combined with alcohol drinking must be taken into account in cancer prevention efforts. Gender-specific medical advice for people with personal or family history of alcohol-related diseases, including cancer, should be strengthened.

### Forum Comments

As described by Forum reviewer Skovenborg: 'The present study highlighted the clustering of alcohol consumption with other demographic, lifestyle and dietary cancer risk factors, such as excess body weight (in men), tobacco use, and poor compliance

with cancer-preventive dietary recommendations. The study managed to collect a very large number of men and women with moderate alcohol consumption and a sufficient number of non-drinkers as well. The study is essentially a study of confounding and of clustering of lifestyle habits. The difficult question is how to separate the drink from the drinker [Day NL. Alcohol and mortality: Separating the drink from the drinker (thesis). Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1978.] The positive association of alcohol consumption and tobacco use is well known and found in most studies. And the association of beverage preference and diet is an example of the influence of regional culture and lifestyle habits."

A number of factors that may diminish the applicability and generalizability of the present findings were noted by reviewer Ellison and other Forum reviewers. As stated, all subjects were computer-literate volunteers, as data were collected over the internet, so results obviously do not apply to non-computer-literate people. Further, the study included subjects who already had cancer, who may well have modified their lifestyle factors after diagnosis. Much space is given to reporting p-values, whereas with this large dataset almost any relation, however trivial, will be found to be "statistically significant." The magnitude of effect is of much more interest.

As stated by Skovenborg: "The study is prone to selection bias due to the process of recruiting participants using the internet. All observational studies are at risk of information bias; however, the use of internet-based questionnaires providing detailed data on the nature of the consumed beverage (83 different items were proposed) and using validated photographs to estimate the portion sizes for each reported food and beverage item seems to be a novel and very clever method of data-collection."

The use of data from 6 randomly chosen days (both weekdays and weekend day) of dietary records should provide a reasonable estimate of most nutrient intake. "Dairy" apparently did not separate milk from butter or cheese; there are differences among these types of dairy products for cardiovascular risk, although the association with cancer risk is unclear.

The main concern of many Forum reviewers was the grouping of all factors into a single, total number for

assessing the relation with alcohol intake. Essentially all associations with alcohol consumption shown in this study are known from previous epidemiologic research. Some are very weak predictors of cancer, so adding them all up and calling them “cancer risk factors” may not be justified. In other words, the use of the total number of “cancer risk factors” to relate to alcohol intake, without attention to the relative importance of each (e.g., smoking is a major factor for cancer risk, while occupation or supplement intake may be less important), is a major problem in interpreting the results.

Relation of present findings to previous research: Reviewer Skovenborg provided an excellent summary of previous data on this subject. “In previous studies of beverage preference and diet conducted in the Mediterranean area, results are discordant. A study carried out in a French population showed that moderate alcohol drinkers or wine drinkers had better dietary habits and healthier behaviours compared to other drinkers or abstainers (Ruidavets JB, et al. Alcohol intake and diet in France, the prominent role of lifestyle. *Eur Heart J* 2004;25:1153–1162). However, in a study carried out in an Italian population, where wine was the most common type of alcoholic beverage consumed, wine drinking was not an indicator of a healthier diet (Chatenoud L, et al. Wine drinking and diet in Italy. *Eur J Clin Nutr* 2000;54:177–179) with no appreciable differences in either sex for any of the food items considered (fruits, raw vegetables, cooked vegetables, salad and fish) between wine drinkers and other alcoholic beverage drinkers and abstainers. In a study from Spain, no relevant differences were found in adherence to the Mediterranean food pattern according to alcoholic beverage preference (Alcacer MA, et al. Alcoholic beverage preference and dietary pattern in Spanish university graduates: the SUN cohort study. *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 2008;62:1178–1186).”

As the summary by Skovenborg continues, “In contrast, other investigations conducted outside the Mediterranean area, such as the United States or Northern Europe, have reported that wine drinkers tended to adopt healthier dietary patterns. In a Danish study, wine drinking compared to other alcoholic beverages was associated with a higher intake of fruit, fish, cooked vegetables, salad and olive oil (Tjønneland A et al., Wine intake and diet in a random

sample of 48 763 Danish men and women. *Am J Clin Nutr* 1999;69:49–54). Another study from Denmark showed that wine buyers made more purchases of healthy food items than people who routinely bought beer (Johansen D et al. Food buying habits of people who buy wine or beer: cross sectional study. *BMJ* 2006;332:519–522). A cross-sectional study from a large American cohort showed that wine drinkers had healthier diets than did those who preferred beer or spirits or had no preference (Barefoot JC et al. Alcoholic beverage preference, diet, and health habits in the UNC alumni heart study. *Am J Clin Nutr* 2002;76:466–472). Similarly, in another study conducted in western New York, wine drinkers tended to have diets more consistent with recommendations to reduce chronic diseases, whereas beer drinkers, liquor drinkers and non-drinkers had patterns less consistent with these guidelines (McCann SE, et al. Alcoholic beverage preference and characteristic of drinkers and nondrinkers in western New York. *Nutr Metab Cardiovasc Dis* 2003;13, 2–11)”.

Overall, this paper presents an interesting tabulation of lifestyle factors associated with alcohol consumption. However, the grouping of all “cancer risk factors” and relating only the total number to alcohol intake makes the relevance of these findings unclear. As added by Forum member Finkel: “After casually accepting alcohol as leading to cancer, a dangerous generalization, the authors laudably recognize that people are not inbred laboratory rats, that they are beset by nearly infinite confounding or possibly confounding variables. I find this paper, though interesting in intent, difficult to interpret.”

#### Forum Summary

It has been shown in most previous studies that moderate drinkers, especially those who generally consume wine, tend to have other “moderate” lifestyle factors. For example, they tend to be better educated, of higher socio-economic status, and generally are more active and eat a healthier diet than non-drinkers. An exception is cigarette smoking, which tends to be more common in drinkers than in abstainers. Epidemiologists studying alcohol and health are always striving to adjust appropriately for other lifestyle factors, attempting to assure that the difference in health outcomes among subjects relates to their drinking, and not to associated lifestyle factors.

In the present study, the investigators related alcohol consumption to a large number of socio-demographic and lifestyle factors that relate to the risk of cancer. They report that several factors were associated with alcohol consumption  $\geq 10\text{g/d}$  in both genders: older age, smoking, higher socio-demographic category, higher income, and less healthy dietary intakes. Other factors were associated with alcohol consumption differently for men and women. The authors then report that the total number of such factors was higher among consumers of  $\geq 10\text{g/d}$  of alcohol than among abstainers or lighter drinkers. They conclude: "The multiplicity of deleterious lifestyle behaviours combined with alcohol drinking must be taken into account in cancer prevention efforts. Gender-specific medical advice for people with personal or family history of alcohol-related diseases, including cancer, should be strengthened."

While Forum reviewers found the data presented in this paper to be of interest, they did not believe that simply adding up all adverse risk factors provided useful information for the prevention of cancer. It is well known that smoking is a major risk factor for certain cancers, and in almost all studies alcohol consumers are more likely to be smokers; hence, drinkers should certainly be advised about the dangers of smoking. On the other hand, by simply summing the number of factors into a total score, the authors included a number of risk factors for which there is less of a scientific basis for their effect on cancer risk (e.g, the intake of supplements). Such factors should not be given the same weight as smoking as risk factors for cancer. Further, this study was carried out among computer-literate volunteers, so it may have limited relevance for the general population.

There have been extensive data showing that "healthy" and "unhealthy" lifestyle factors tend to cluster: for example, light-to-moderate drinkers tend to be leaner and eat a healthier diet than non-drinkers or heavy drinkers, as shown in this study. However, the prevention of chronic diseases relates to a large number of behaviors, and alcohol consumption cannot be considered as an isolated factor. Current epidemiologic data suggest that the combination of not smoking, being physically active, eating a healthy diet, avoiding obesity, and, unless contraindicated, regularly consuming small amounts of an alcoholic beverage, together make up what can be defined as a "healthy lifestyle."

Comments on this paper were provided by the following members of the International Scientific Forum on Alcohol Research:

Harvey Finkel, MD, Hematology/Oncology, Boston University Medical Center, Boston, MA, USA

Erik Skovenborg, MD, Scandinavian Medical Alcohol Board, Practitioner, Aarhus, Denmark

R. Curtis Ellison, MD, Section of Preventive Medicine & Epidemiology, Boston University School of Medicine, Boston, MA, USA

Arne Svilaas, MD, PhD, general practice and lipidology, Oslo University Hospital, Oslo, Norway

Gordon Troup, MSc, DSc, School of Physics, Monash University, Victoria, Australia

Pierre-Louis Teissedre, PhD, Faculty of Oenology – ISVV, University Victor Segalen Bordeaux 2, Bordeaux, France

Creina Stockley, PhD, MBA, Clinical Pharmacology, Health and Regulatory Information Manager, Australian Wine Research Institute, Glen Osmond, South Australia, Australia

Dee Blackhurst, PhD, Lipid Laboratory, University of Cape Town Health Sciences Faculty, Cape Town, South Africa

Giovanni de Gaetano, MD, PhD, Department of Epidemiology and Prevention, IRCCS Istituto Neurologico Mediterraneo NEUROMED, Pozzilli, Italy

## Alcohol dependence, binge eating, and compensatory behaviours

Authors of a study published in the *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs* state that rates of alcohol dependence are elevated in women with eating disorders who engage in binge eating or compensatory behaviours compared with women with eating disorders who do not report binge eating or compensatory behaviours and with healthy controls. Alcohol dependence, binge eating, and compensatory behaviours are heritable; however, it is unclear whether a shared genetic liability contributes to the observable association among these traits, and little information exists regarding this shared liability in men.

Researchers investigated genetic and environmental correlations among alcohol dependence, binge eating, and compensatory behaviours in male and female twins.

Participants included 5,993 same- and opposite-sex twins from the Australian Twin Registry who were assessed for lifetime alcohol dependence and binge eating. Compensatory behaviours were assessed via a general health questionnaire in women only. Biometrical twin models estimated genetic and environmental influences on alcohol dependence, binge eating, and compensatory behaviours.

In women, the multivariate twin model suggested that additive genetic and nonshared environmental effects influenced alcohol dependence, binge eating, and compensatory behaviours, with heritability estimates ranging from 38% to 53%. The best-fitting sex-limitation model was a common effects model that equated all genetic and nonshared environmental influences in men and women. The heritability estimates were 50% and 38% for alcohol dependence and binge eating, respectively. Overall, there were significant genetic correlations between alcohol dependence and binge eating, alcohol dependence and compensatory behaviours, and binge eating and compensatory behaviours.

These findings indicate that common genetic factors may underlie the vulnerability to alcohol dependence and the liability to binge eating and compensatory behaviours.

Source: *A Twin Study of Alcohol Dependence, Binge Eating, and Compensatory Behaviours*, Melissa A. Munn-Chernoff, AE Duncan, JD Grant, TD Wade, A Agrawal, KK Bucholz, PA F Madden, NG Martin, AC Heath. *J. Stud. Alcohol Drugs*, 74, 664–673, 2013 [Open access].

## Alcohol use in young adulthood: Do self-control and parents' perceptions of friends during adolescence modify peer influence?

A study assessed the influence of peer alcohol use during adolescence on young adults' alcohol use and abuse, and investigated to what extent parents' perception of their adolescent child's friends and adolescent's self-control modified this influence.

Researcher analysed data from the first, third, and fourth wave of a population-based prospective cohort study of 2230 adolescents conducted between 2001 and 2010 (mean ages: 11.1, 16.3, and 19.1, respectively). Alcohol use and abuse were measured at T4 by self-report questionnaires and by the Composite International Diagnostics Interview (CIDI), respectively. Peer alcohol use, self-control, and parents' perception of their adolescent child's friends were measured at T3.

Findings suggest that peer alcohol use during adolescence was related to young adults' alcohol use and abuse [odds ratio 1.31 (1.11-1.54) and 1.50 (1.20-1.87), respectively]. Neither parents' perception

of their adolescent child's friends, nor self-control modified this relationship. Alcohol abusers were more likely to have low self-control than alcohol users. No differences were found between alcohol users and abusers regarding their parents' perception of their friends and peer alcohol use.

The authors conclude that peer alcohol use during adolescence affects young adults' alcohol use and abuse. Self-control was only related to alcohol abuse. Peer influence was not modified by parents' perception of peers or by self-control. They therefore recommend that peer alcohol use and self-control should thus be separate targets in the prevention of alcohol use/abuse.

Source: *Alcohol use and abuse in young adulthood: Do self-control and parents' perceptions of friends during adolescence modify peer influence? The TRAILS Study*. Leenke Visser, Andrea F. de Winter, René Veenstra, Frank C. Verhulst, Sijmen A. Reijneveld.

## Gender-specific age, period and birth cohort effects on alcohol abstinence and consumption level for drinkers in Great Britain

British alcohol consumption and abstinence rates have substantially increased in the last three decades. Researchers analysed age, period and birth cohort effects to improve their understanding of these trends and suggest groups for targeted interventions to reduce resultant harms.

Data was taken from annual nationally representative samples of approximately 20,000 adults (16+) within 13,000 households. Age (8 groups: 16-17 to 75+), period (6 groups: 1980-84 to 2005-09) and birth cohorts (19 groups: 1900-1904 to 1990-1994). Outcome measures were abstinence and average weekly alcohol consumption. Controls were income, education, ethnicity and country.

After accounting for period and cohort trends, 18-24 year-olds have the highest consumption levels ( $p < 0.001$ ) and lowest abstinence rates ( $p = 0.002$ ). Consumption generally decreases and abstinence rates increase in later life. Until recently, successive birth cohorts' consumption levels were

also increasing. However, for those born post-1985, abstinence rates are increasing and male consumption is falling relative to preceding cohorts. In contrast, female drinking behaviours have polarised over the study period with increasing abstinence rates accompanying increases in drinkers' consumption levels.

The authors conclude that rising female consumption of alcohol and progression of higher consuming birth cohorts through the life course are key drivers of increased per capita alcohol consumption in the UK. Recent declines in alcohol consumption appear attributable to reduced consumption and increased abstinence rates amongst the most recent birth cohorts, especially males, and general increased rates of abstinence across the study period.

Source: Trend analysis and modelling of gender-specific age, period and birth cohort effects on alcohol abstinence and consumption level for drinkers in Great Britain using the General Lifestyle Survey 1984-2009. Y. Meng\*, J. Holmes, D. Hill-McManus, A. Brennan, P. Meier *Addiction*. 2013 Aug 14.

## Investigating young Australian males' intentions to engage in recreational swimming while under the influence of alcohol

Drowning, a largely preventable problem, continues to be a serious issue worldwide, with young men particularly at risk. Alcohol and drugs are often present among young males and, particularly for males aged 18-34 years, alcohol is considered to be a significant risk factor for drowning.

A study published in the journal *Community Health* systematically examined the motivations guiding the intentions of young Australian men to engage in drinking and swimming. The study was designed to investigate the ability of the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) and additional variables to predict males' intentions to drink and swim.

211 Males aged 18-34 years completed a survey which assessed the TPB constructs of attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control (PBC); and additional variables of group norms, anticipated regret, objective (i.e. swimming ability)

and perceived (i.e. perceived severity and perceived susceptibility) risk perceptions, and past behaviour.

Support was found for the TPB constructs of attitude and subjective norm, but not PBC, as well as the additional constructs of group norm, anticipated regret, objective risk, and past behaviour in predicting males' intentions to drink and swim; explaining an overall 76 % of variance.

Knowledge gained from this study will help to inform resultant interventions designed to discourage alcohol use in, on, or around water and, thus, prevent drownings in this at risk group.

Source: *Drinking and Swimming: Investigating Young Australian Males' Intentions to Engage in Recreational Swimming While Under the Influence of Alcohol*. Kyra Hamilton, Hannah Schmidt *Journal of Community Health*, August 2013.

## New evidence suggests impulsive adolescents more likely to drink heavily

A study investigated reciprocal prospective relationships between multiple behavioural impulsivity tasks (assessing delay discounting, risk-taking and disinhibition) and alcohol involvement (consumption, drunkenness and problems) among adolescents. The researchers hypothesized that performance on the tasks would predict subsequent alcohol involvement, and that alcohol involvement would lead to increases in behavioural impulsivity over time.

The classroom based study involved Two hundred and eighty-seven adolescents who were aged 12 or 13 years at study enrolment from secondary schools in North West England. The study assessed impulsivity and alcohol involvement five times over 2 years (once every 6 months, on average).

Participants reported their alcohol involvement and completed computerized tasks of disinhibition, delay discounting and risk-taking at each assessment. Cross-sectional and prospective relationships between the

variables of interest were investigated using cross-lagged analyses.

The researchers found that all behavioural impulsivity tasks predicted a composite index of alcohol involvement 6 months later, and these prospective relationships were reliable across the majority of time-points. They did not however observe the converse relationship across time: alcohol involvement did not predict performance on behavioural impulsivity tasks at any subsequent time point.

The authors conclude that several measures of impulsivity predict escalation in alcohol involvement in young adolescents, but alcohol use does not appear to alter impulsivity.

Source: Multiple behavioural impulsivity tasks predict prospective alcohol involvement in adolescents. Gordon Fernie, Margot Peeters, Matthew J. Gullo, Paul Christiansen, Jon C. Cole, Harry Sumnall, Matt Field, *Addiction*, first published online: 14 August 2013.

## Who pre-drinks before a night out and why? Socioeconomic status and motives behind young people's pre-drinking in the United Kingdom

A study examined the motivation for pre-drinking amongst young people in the UK. The study sought to identify young people's main motive for pre-drinking in the United Kingdom, how much they drink on an event-specific night out, and whether motives or socioeconomic status (particularly their income level) explain the alcohol quantities they drink.

A survey of 628 people (aged 18-35) was conducted on-site in 26 bars, clubs and pubs in four cities and towns. The results show that young males drink on average 9.8 and females 7.4 standard units of alcohol before a night out. Saving money is the most prevalent motive for pre-drinking. Although lower income levels cannot explain whether a young person will pre-drink on an event-specific night out, young people's income level and their motives explain the

quantities they consume. Lower-earning males who pre-drank to save money consumed larger quantities of alcohol at home and lower-earning females also pre-drank larger quantities either because they wanted to get out of control or because they wanted to be social.

The authors suggest that prevention strategies likely to be effective in reducing the alcohol quantities that young people pre-drink should take into account both socioeconomic status and motives for pre-drinking.

Source: Who pre-drinks before a night out and why? Socioeconomic status and motives behind young people's pre-drinking in the United Kingdom. Ostergaard J; Andrade SB, *Journal of Substance Use*, Published early online 12 July 2013.

## Update of the UK government's alcohol policy

The Home Office message to the Government and Partners Group made clear that minimum unit pricing remains a policy under consideration, but will not be taken forward at present. The Government does not believe that the evidence supports a ban on multi-buy promotions in shops as its effectiveness in reducing hazardous and harmful drinking remains inconclusive. The Government is convinced that targeted local partnership solutions should be strongly supported.

The Home Office has said the Government's next steps will be to:

- Take targeted national action, ending sales of the cheapest alcohol by introducing a ban on selling alcohol below the price of Duty plus VAT, and strengthening the ban on irresponsible promotions in pubs and clubs. The Government will introduce a ban on the sale of alcohol below Duty plus VAT no later than Spring 2014. Changes to the Licensing Act and banning the sale of alcohol below duty plus VAT will require legislation.
- The Government continues to challenge industry to increase its efforts, building on what has already been achieved through the Public Health Responsibility Deal. This includes improving education to promote safer drinking; reducing the availability of high strength products that cause the most harm for problem drinkers; and responsible marketing and product placement.
- Other Government Endorsed initiatives include supporting local action on alcohol-related

harm, identifying a number of high harm local alcohol action areas and take action with them to strengthen local partnerships; improving enforcement; and sharing good practice based on what works locally.

- Make the licensing system more targeted, proportionate and flexible by freeing businesses and communities from unnecessary red tape. In particular, by introducing a simpler authorisation process for community groups and those who only sell small amounts of alcohol as part of their wider business.

For industry, this means promoting, expanding and supporting successful partnership initiatives (e.g. Community Alcohol Partnerships, Best Bar None, Pubwatch, Purple Flag) in order to reduce alcohol-related crime and disorder and binge drinking, and to improve the local economy. It includes agreement by industry to provide funding to support initiatives in local action areas. The Government has also asked for assistance with mapping the local delivery landscape and identifying potential gaps in the response to specific issues, such as improving education to promote safer drinking and prevent underage drinking. The Home Secretary has already asked for industry commitment to continued financial support for Drinkaware. In addition, the Government wants to see further action in relation to the new Education Pledge to promote safer drinking and to help prevent underage drinking.

## South African roadshow for teenagers

In South Africa, the Industry Association for Responsible Alcohol Use (ARA) has launched a roadshow to educate teenagers about the negative impacts of alcohol and drug abuse.

The roadshow began at Bosmansdam High School where Subcouncil Chairman James Vos talked to children about the dangers of substance misuse. He explained that Cape Town is looking at ways to introduce a greater emphasis on prevention by targeting young people with psychosocial support, over and above alcohol awareness.

Vos said that the City and Provincial departments of Health and Social Development are committed to

working together to promote healthy lifestyles through education and counselling.

The school received 200 copies of an information guide for teenagers on alcohol misuse, a practical guide that assists parents in initiating conversations with their children about alcohol-related issues.

[ara.co.za/uploads/teenagers\\_and\\_alcohol\\_brochure.pdf](http://ara.co.za/uploads/teenagers_and_alcohol_brochure.pdf)



## Drink drive campaign raises awareness of the risks of driving ‘the morning after’

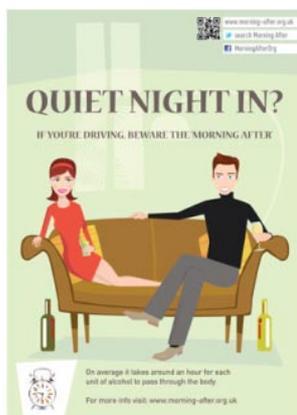
The latest phase of the Morning After drink drive campaign focuses on preventing alcohol related road accidents. In particular, its aims to remind those who choose to stay at home and drink during the night that in many cases alcohol can still affect their judgment the following day

The ‘Quiet night in’ campaign will run through September and October 2013, at the time of year when the nights draw in and people begin to think of the winter months with ‘quiet nights’ in front of the TV.

The campaign is designed to remind normally-responsible drivers of the danger of unwittingly being ‘over the limit’ on the school run or journey to work, after a quiet night in and a few drinks.

The morning after website includes an interactive calculator to demonstrate the affect of different drinks and volumes on blood alcohol concentrations.

[morning-after.org.uk](http://morning-after.org.uk)



## UK Think campaign targets young males

A Department for Transport ‘Think!’ drink drive initiative has been delivering adverts to the mobiles of a specific target population; The Mobile ads, which ran until the end of August, targeted only men aged between 18 and 29-years-old who are in pubs between 6pm to 11pm on Fridays and Saturdays. The DfT is using demographic and location based data media to deliver the ads as it seeks to avoid wastage and deliver a more effective campaign.

The DfT estimates, published at the beginning of the month suggest that drink-driving deaths increased by 25% in 2012, reversing a long-term downward trend. The Government has cut spending on road safety campaigns from £19m in 2008/09, to just £4m in 2011/12, which represents an 80% spending reduction.

Greg Isbister, chief executive officer and founder of BlisMedia, said: “We have proved with previous campaigns that targeting audiences according to their location, demographic and at the right time of day significantly increases the click through rate of digital campaigns.”



## UK Drink-Drive deaths: good and bad news 2012

Department for Transport (DfT) provisional figures suggest that 290 people were killed in drink-drive accidents in the UK in 2012 - up 25% from 230 on the previous 12 months. The 2011 total was the lowest since records began in 1979.

There were 250 fatal drink-drive accidents in 2012, compared with 220 in 2011. However, overall, the number of accidents involving drink-driving in 2012 remained fairly static (6,680 - fractionally down on the 2011 figure of 6,690) and the number of people seriously injured in drink-drive accidents declined to 1,210 in 2012, from 1,270 in 2011. Minor injuries in

drink-drive accidents totalled 8,500 in 2012 - slightly up on the 8,420 figure in 2011.

Among those killed in drink-drive accidents, 68% were drivers and riders over the legal alcohol limit. The remaining 32% were other road users, involved in the accident but not necessarily over the legal limit themselves.

Local Transport Minister Norman Baker said: “We are taking forward a package of measures to streamline enforcement against drink-driving, including approving portable evidential breath-testing equipment which will allow for more effective and efficient enforcement.”

## Cost of insurance for convicted drink drivers in the UK

United Kingdom drivers convicted for drink driving offences could subsequently face annual insurance premium increases of over 100%. According to comparison site moneysupermarket.com, 50-year-old drivers receiving a drink driving conviction could face insurance increases of 121%, while drivers between 60 and 70 years old could face an increase of 108%, and younger drivers could face an increase of 53%.

## RAC favour restricted driving licences for the young

Fatal accidents among young drivers could be more than halved by putting restrictions on their licences, according to a report by the RAC Foundation. The report states that young people aged 15 to 24 are four times more likely to die in a road crash than from drug, alcohol, gun and knife-crime combined, says the RAC.

One in five young drivers (17 to 24-year-olds) will have an accident within six months of passing their test and 1,552 young drivers were killed or seriously injured on Britain's roads in 2011 – more than four deaths per day.

The RAC argues that bringing in a graduated licensing system - including restrictions on night-time driving and the number of passengers - would allow young drivers to gain invaluable experience in safer circumstances.

The RAC Foundation study – Young Driver Safety: Solutions to an Age-Old Problem, authored by Foundation staff members Elizabeth Box and Ivo Wengraf - looked at evidence from several countries with graduated licensing including America, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, which show fatal collisions for this age group falling by up to 60% and overall casualties being cut by up to 32%, depending on the range of measures implemented.

[racfoundation.org/media-centre/young-driver-safety-solutions-age-old-problem-press-release](http://racfoundation.org/media-centre/young-driver-safety-solutions-age-old-problem-press-release)

## Weekend road crashes drop after extended opening hours 'reduce binge-drinking'

An analysis of official data shows that the number of crashes reported to police fell by 13%, or 1,643 a month, after licensing laws were reformed in 2005.

The decline was most dramatic among drivers aged between 18 and 25 and has been most marked on Friday and Saturday nights. Accidents involving young drivers at those times have fallen by 33%.

Economists at Lancaster University Management School said that, among the explanations, was the possibility that later opening times had succeeded in reducing binge-drinking.

They said that the new hours, which have been adopted by more than 60% of premises, allowing them to open until midnight, 1am or beyond, might have reduced the incentive for young people to drive in search of a house party, or illegal drinking den, at the stroke of 11pm.

The authors acknowledge that the findings may appear counter-intuitive, but suggest that the change has cut the number of people killed or seriously injured on the roads by up to 500 a month.

Source: Did liberalising English and Welsh bar hours cause traffic accidents? Colin Green, John Heywood, Maria Navarro Paniagua. Lancaster University, Department of Economics, 2013.

## Videos on 'alcohol and the family' & more

A series of videos covering expert presentations on the theme of 'alcohol and the family and other key topics are now available from the Film Exchange on Alcohol and Drugs (FEAD).

The presentations were filmed at the New Directions in the Study of Alcohol Group (NDSAG) 2013 conference held in Birmingham. The videos available cover a range of key alcohol policy and research subjects, and include speakers Jim Orford, Jim McCambridge, James Nicholls, Richard Velleman and many others.

[fead.org.uk/](http://fead.org.uk/)

## Introduction of late-night drinking levy

A council in north London looks likely to become one of the first to use a new UK law to charge a levy on bars and clubs selling alcohol after midnight. The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 allows a council to charge licensed premises open between midnight and 6am a levy, to help cover the cost of policing.

Islington Council says it has a “**very serious late-night drinking problem**” with crime, disorder and mess on its streets. Councillor Paul Convery said “**We’ve got more late-night establishments per head of population than almost anywhere else in London and we just think we have to find ways of meeting the costs.**”

Bar and club managers have complained that fees will unfairly increase costs. The amount charged per year will range from about £300 for a small bar to £4,440 for a large venue. Mr Convery said this and several other proposals were being considered to tackle Islington’s most troubled areas. A consultation will take place before a decision is made.

Elsewhere, nightclubs have voluntarily agreed to shut early in a bid to cut crime and anti-social behaviour. Venues in Norwich stopped selling alcohol after 4am from Friday, 3 August. Norfolk Police said the availability of alcohol into the early hours was seen as a key contribution to disorder. Norfolk Police figures show there have been 336 more crimes between 3am and 6am in the three-year period since clubs in Norwich have opened beyond 04:00, compared with the three-year period before it started. Norfolk police and Norwich City Council have been working with licensees to improve safety in the area.

Supt Paul Sanford, of Norfolk Police, said: “**Since de-regulation through the Licensing Act in 2005, clubs in Norwich have opened beyond 4am and there has been a dramatic increase in alcohol related crime between 3am and 6am... Earlier closing will help to re-balance the resource demand for emergency services and city council services such as street cleaning.**”

## Independent audit finds ‘overwhelming majority’ of drinks packaging is responsible in the UK

Independent audit results in the UK show that the vast majority of alcohol products conform to Portman Group responsibility standards.

As part of its ongoing compliance work, the Portman Group appointed independent consultants, Campden BRI, to audit a random sample of 500 alcoholic drinks in supermarkets, convenience stores and off-licences. The vast majority of the sample (92.3%) was compliant with the Portman Group Code of Practice.

7.7% of the sample were identified by Campden as having issues which could potentially put them in breach of the Code. The Portman Group is contacting the companies involved to discuss the findings and companies will have three months to make any changes to their product packaging. If the issues cannot be resolved they will be referred to the Independent Complaints Panel to investigate a potential breach.

Kay Perry, Head of Regulatory Affairs at the Portman Group, said: “**This independent audit has confirmed what we know – that the overwhelming majority**

**of alcohol producers package their products responsibly and are compliant with the Code.** The Portman Group commissions market audits on an adhoc basis to test market compliance with the Code. Individual products and companies are only named if they become the subject of a formal complaint and subsequent ruling by the ICP.

## Report of MRC and ESRC Workshop identifies target areas for future UK research opportunities

A recently published report of Medical Research Council and Economic and Social Research Council Workshop held on October 22, 2012 scopes the potential research opportunities across a broad front, ranging from mechanistic and social research on alcohol-related harm, to public health and policy strategies to prevent it.

[mrc.ac.uk/Utilities/Documentrecord/index.htm?d=MRC009308](http://mrc.ac.uk/Utilities/Documentrecord/index.htm?d=MRC009308)

## Parents urged to talk to their children about alcohol in pre-teen years

Research from Drinkaware highlights the level of young people's exposure to images of drunken friends on social media. 39% of children aged 10-17 who use social networking sites report seeing images of their friends drunk, including 13% of 10-12 year-olds. The study conducted by Ipsos MORI shows online networking sites could have a significant influence on young people's perceptions of normal drinking behaviour.

The research findings show how the influence of peers increases steeply with age; 7% of 10-11 year-olds report being encouraged to drink by someone their age or younger, rising to 37% by the time they are 15-17 years old. 19% of 10-17 year-olds say that all or most of their friends drink alcohol.

Drinkaware is encouraging parents to talk to their children about alcohol in their pre-teen years and help them resist the pressure to drink. Drinkaware reassures parents that their influence on their

children may be greater than they think, and wants parents to support their children to avoid alcohol by using age-appropriate tips and advice available on its website.

Anne Foster, Director, Marketing and Communications at Drinkaware, says: "Children as young as 10 are seeing drunkenness normalised through images - whether this is online, in the media or through their own experiences. Undoubtedly, friends are influential in shaping the way young people think about alcohol, but just as influential are parents who can provide support and advice to help children cope with these pressures.

"Our research shows that most children will go to their parents first for information and advice about alcohol. While that is reassuring for parents to know, it also shows how important it is that parents feel confident and well prepared to have those conversations."

## Dorset police scheme to deal with alcohol-related offences

A scheme has been launched to deal with alcohol-related offences in Dorset.

Police say that the Alcohol Diversion Scheme will mean that offenders issued with a Penalty Notice for Disorder (PND) can attend a half-day educational course in order to get the PND cancelled. Examples of PND offences include drunk and disorderly, Public Order Act offences and low-level thefts and damage where alcohol is the contributing factor.

Every recipient of an alcohol-related PND can apply for the course which costs £40 and covers a number of subjects relating to alcohol, including health management, consequences and ways forward for individuals to address their problems.

The scheme is led by Dorset Police, in partnership with local authorities. Acting Inspector Steve Lyne said "This is a scheme which has been used in other parts of the country to great effect. The principle behind it is to divert individuals away from trouble at an early stage... It is part of our continued commitment to reduce the number of alcohol-related incidents in our town centres".

## Pubs could face increased enforcement activity from police in 'week of action'

Pub and bar operators could face enforcement action from police during a week of action on licensing and alcohol-related harm during 16 - 22 September. The Association of Chief Police Officers runs the week every year but the campaign has re-branded for 2013.

Local police forces will determine how they propose to implement or action this. However, it is thought likely this will be a period of increased enforcement activity.

Association of Licensed Multiple Retailers chief executive David McHattie said "This is an interesting initiative and we are confident retailers will come out of the week with glowing reports from their local police forces.

"Responsible retailers have nothing to fear from any such activity and will indeed welcome the opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to providing a safe, supervised atmosphere for all their customers and communities."

## Call for safer drinking levels for over 65s

Newcastle University academics have called for changes to be made to the recommended safe levels of drinking for over 65s and also special alcohol advice to be made available for older people.

The call comes as the team from Newcastle and Sunderland Universities publish the paper 'A Qualitative Study of Alcohol, Health and Identities among UK Adults in Later Life'. The research supported by a grant from the charity Age UK looks at the reasons why many older people continue to drink to levels hazardous or harmful to their health.

The report suggests that many older people may not recognise that they are heavy drinkers, especially if they don't see themselves as dependent and therefore having a problem. Heavy drinking in this age group

is strongly linked with depression and anxiety and longer term health problems. Metabolism is slower in later life, and older people are very likely to take prescribed medicines that can interact with alcohol. For these reasons heavy drinking can have a bigger impact on the lives of older people than the younger generation.

Dr Katie Houghton of Newcastle University said: "Alcohol interventions are not working for older people for many reasons. A lot of those we interviewed said the messages around alcohol were very confusing. There is a need to develop new approaches to target the older population. We also think the Government really needs to start looking at lowering the recommended limit for alcohol consumption in those over 65."

## London Pharmacy IBA Scratch Card project

A pan-London pharmacy initiative that distributed over 24,000 'IBA scratch cards' has published a UCL evaluation report detailing the project. The report highlights the opportunity for community pharmacy to deliver community-based services traditionally provided by GPs or hospital outpatient clinics to individuals who wish to stop or reduce their drinking.

Results of the initiative show that the delivery through pharmacies of a scratch card based (AUDIT-C) alcohol use assessment tool is acceptable to both men and women of all ages and ethnicities in London. In three months over 24,000 scratch cards were distributed across London, with over 23,800 returned to pharmacies and recorded in an online system. Just over four out of every ten (43.5%. n=10,351) pharmacy customers completing the AUDIT-C scratch

card recorded a score of five or above, indicative of higher risk drinking.

These findings add weight to arguments in favour of enabling community pharmacies to develop further as 'public health' or 'healthy living' care and support centres. The authors of the report argue that future work is needed to establish the most cost effective interventions and referral practices for pharmacists seeking to help people who wish to reduce their alcohol related health and allied risk levels.



## Survey finds some parents allow their children to drink on family holiday

Travel agent sunshine.co.uk surveyed 1,782 British parents, each with a child under the age of 18, who had been away with their children on a foreign trip in the last 12 months.

26% of parents had let children under 18 drink alcohol when they were on foreign trips. Of these parents, 55% were parents of 15 to 17 year-old, 23% of 12 to 14 year-olds, 18% of 9 to 11-year-olds and 3% of 6 to 8 year-olds.

The main reasons given for allowing their children to drink included that they thought it was legal abroad, it was easier to get away with it abroad, or they wanted their children to have fun on holiday.

Sunshine.co.uk managing director Chris Clarkson said: "Parents that think the legal drinking age differs abroad should always check their facts, because in most places it's still 18 or 21".

## Smoking, drinking and drug use among young people in England - 2012

The 2013 Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use Among Young People in England - 2012 report from the Health & Social Care Information Centre gives results from an annual survey of secondary school pupils in England carried out since 1982.

The survey asks about use of alcohol, drugs and smoking but also attitudes towards them and the links between the three behaviours. It breaks down results into gender, age and ethnicity and whether children are truanting or excluded from school.

Key findings relating to alcohol:

- 43% had ever consumed alcohol. Boys and girls were equally likely to have done so. The proportion of pupils who have had an alcoholic drink increased from 12% of 11 year olds, to 74% of 15 year olds.
- 10% had consumed alcohol in the last week, continuing the downward trend since 2003, when 25% of pupils had drunk alcohol in the last week.
- Pupils who had drunk in the last week had drunk an average (mean) of 12.5 units. Median consumption, a more reliable measure, was lower (8.0 units).
- Most pupils who had drunk alcohol in the last week had consumed more than one type of drink.

Boys were more likely to have drunk beer, lager or cider, whereas girls were more likely to have drunk spirits, alcopops or wine.

- 50% of pupils who had drunk alcohol in the last four weeks said that they had been drunk at least once during that time. 61% of them said that they had deliberately tried to get drunk, 39% said they had not.
- Pupils were more likely to drink alcohol if someone they live with does: 83% of pupils whose households did not include anyone who drank alcohol didn't drink themselves.
- The proportion of pupils who think it is OK for someone of their age to drink alcohol has fallen in recent years. Down to 28% of pupils compared with 46% in 2003.
- The proportion of pupils who drank alcohol was lower in London than anywhere else; 31% of pupils in London had ever drunk alcohol. Outside London, the proportion of pupils who had ever drunk alcohol ranged from 36% in the West Midlands to 51% in the North East.

[hscic.gov.uk/catalogue/PUB11334](http://hscic.gov.uk/catalogue/PUB11334)

## Network Rail release drink warning video

Network Rail has released a video warning passengers of the dangers of being drunk at rail stations.

More than 1,600 people have been hurt in slips, trips and falls at the 17 stations run by Network Rail in the last year. The video shows CCTV clips of some of the accidents that have happened although all those involved escaped serious injury.

Incidents in the last year have included one death, 51 bone fractures, 19 dislocations, five concussions and dozens of bruises, cuts and abrasions as people have fallen on steps and escalators, over luggage and even off platforms between trains.

Network Rail's network operations managing director Robin Gisby said: "We do everything we can to make moving around our stations as easy and safe as possible but our teams deal with far too many people who have injured themselves where it appears alcohol has been a factor."

British Transport Police deputy chief constable Paul Crowther said: "Somewhat inevitably, drinking alcohol can impair people's judgment and co-ordination... Encouraging passengers to be more aware of their surroundings, particularly when they have had a drink, and to be alert to the inherent dangers that exist in stations will, we hope, reduce avoidable slips and falls across the network."

[youtube.com/watch?v=\\_\\_BSiChUdak](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=__BSiChUdak)



## Monitoring and Evaluating Scotland's Alcohol Strategy Alcohol Sales Update

The Scottish Government has tasked NHS Health Scotland with the responsibility of evaluating Scotland's alcohol strategy (including Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP), if implemented) through the Monitoring and Evaluating Scotland's Alcohol Strategy (MESAS) programme of work.

The recent update of data includes annual figures from 1994-2012 for the off and on trade in Scotland and England and Wales. Data, reported by beverage type includes the volume of pure alcohol sold per adult (aged 16+), the volume of pure alcohol (units) sold per adult (aged 16+ years) and the average price per unit of alcohol sold.

Alcohol Focus Scotland report that Adult sales of pure alcohol in Scotland fell by 3% between 2011 and 2012, 8% since 2009. Despite this decline, alcohol sales remained 6% higher than they were in 1994 and 19% higher than in England and Wales. The difference between Scotland and England/Wales in 2012 was mainly due to higher sales through supermarkets and off-licences in Scotland, particularly of spirits.

[healthscotland.com/documents/21782.aspx](http://healthscotland.com/documents/21782.aspx)

## Scotland - Alcohol deaths down but levels remain high

The General Register Office (GRO) has published alcohol-related death statistics along with figures on other causes of premature death.

The number of alcohol related deaths has also dropped significantly to 1080 people in 2012 (compared to 1,247 in 2011) This is the lowest number of deaths where alcohol was an underlying cause since 1997.

The figures, released by the General Register Office for Scotland, show that the 1,080 deaths in 2012 consisted of 741 men and 339 women. There were 145 alcohol-related deaths of people who were 30-44. 420 people aged 45-59 and 394 deaths of 60-74 year olds.

Scottish health minister Alex Neil said: "We are looking to take bold measures to address alcohol misuse in Scotland. What all these figures show is that by encouraging people to live healthier lives, eat better, be more active, stop smoking and drink sensibly, it can have a positive impact on their health and leads to a longer life."

## Alcohol consumption during pregnancy down in Ireland

A report in Ireland has confirmed a 'marked reduction' in alcohol consumption among pregnant women. 'Alcohol Consumption in Pregnancy: Results from the general practice setting', was conducted by a team of medical experts attached to the Royal Academy of Medicine in Ireland. Published in the Irish Journal of Medical Science, the research was conducted among 240 women attending antenatal visits in 15 teaching GP practices in the greater Dublin area.

97% of women drank no more than once a week; 62% of these said they did not drink at all; 10% drank two to four times a month; 2.5% drank two to three times a week or more.

The research however, raises concern at the high levels of drinking, including binge-drinking, among Irish women in the year prior to being confirmed pregnant, the time of 'greatest vulnerability' to alcohol for a foetus. The report recommends therefore that health promotion should now focus on this issue, particularly given that up to half of all pregnancies are unplanned.

The report also proposes mandatory labelling of alcohol regarding the foetal risks of drinking to highlight the periconceptional period.

[ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23934378](http://ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23934378)

## Alcohol spend figures in Ireland

In Ireland, Central Statistics Office (CSO) figures revealed an increase in Ireland's alcohol spend in 2012 to €6.3 billion.

Conor Cullen, Communications Officer with Alcohol Action Ireland said "€6.3 billion is a huge figure for a relatively small country like Ireland to spend on alcohol in a year and it's particularly worrying that our total spend on alcohol in 2012 increased for the second year in a row and was more than we spent on it than in any year since 2008," said "To put this figure into context, at 7.7% of our total personal expenditure, it's far more than twice what we spent on clothing and footwear last year".

The action group said the figures show the urgent need for alcohol-harm reduction measures currently being considered by Government, particularly key measures targeting the pricing, marketing and availability of alcohol in Ireland.

## AFL's players to back anti-binge drinking message

The Australian Football League Players' Association (AFLPA) has signed a partnership with the Be the Influence – Tackling Binge Drinking initiative.

The government-run campaign, which is being managed by the Australian National Preventive Health Agency (ANPHA), aims to tackle binge drinking and the influence of alcohol promotion among young people.

Under the AFLPA partnership, Be the Influence – Tackling Binge Drinking will be the naming rights partner of the 2013 Leigh Matthews MVP Award, given to the AFL's best player each year, and the 2013 AFLPA Most Valuable Player Awards, which will take place on 10th September.

Additionally, Collingwood star Scott Pendlebury has become an ambassador of the programme and will swap his normal number ten guernsey for the number 70 to highlight the number of young Australians hospitalised each week due to alcohol-related assault.

Pendlebury said: "Youth binge drinking is affecting many individuals, families and communities across the country and I'd like to think AFL players can help influence young people's decision making when faced with peer pressure... We're not trying to stop people drinking – Be the Influence is about trying to change the way people drink and reduce the dangerous impacts of excessive alcohol."

AFLPA chief executive Matt Finnis added: "This is a great opportunity for our players to help change the binge drinking culture often associated with football clubs and sport in general."

## More than a third of pedestrians killed in 2011 in the US had been drinking

Of the 4,432 pedestrians killed in the US in 2011, 35% (1,547) had blood alcohol levels above the legal limit for driving, according to government data.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration data shows that among the 625 pedestrians aged 25- to 34-years-old who were killed, half were alcohol impaired. Just under half the pedestrians killed who were in their early 20s and their mid-30s to mid-50s were also impaired. For pedestrians aged 55 or older or younger than age 20, the proportion of was a third or less. 13 % of drivers involved in crashes in which pedestrians were killed were over the .08 limit. Overall, about a third of traffic fatalities in 2011, 31%,

## NIH produces online course for teen alcohol screening

The National Institutes of Health report that a new online training course has been produced by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, together with Medscape, to assist health care professionals conduct alcohol screening for adolescents.

About 190,000 people under age 21 visit emergency rooms for alcohol-related injuries and about 5,000 die as a result of underage drinking each year. The NIAAA has produced a new online training course designed to help health care professionals conduct rapid, evidence-based alcohol screening and brief intervention with youth.

The course presents three scenarios for youth at different levels of risk for alcohol-related harm, and illustrates a four-step clinical screening process. The course uses a quick two-question screening tool, which asks about the drinking habits of an adolescent's friends and their own drinking. The course also provides a risk estimator and lessons on how to conduct an intervention according to a patient's risk. In addition, the course gives an overview of brief motivational interviewing, which is considered to have the best potential effectiveness among teens.

Coauthor of the course Vivian B. Faden, Ph.D., director of the Office of Science Policy and Communications at NIAAA, said in a statement. "We developed the guide and the continuing medical education course to help health care professionals reduce underage drinking and its risks in a way that fits easily into their practice."

or 9,878 deaths were attributable to crashes involving a driver with a BAC of .08 or higher.

Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx released the data as he launched a new effort to reduce pedestrian deaths. Jonathan Adkins, a spokesman for the Governors Highway Safety Association, which represents state highway safety offices, said anti-drunk driving campaigns may be encouraging more people to walk home after a night of drinking. Alcohol can impair pedestrians' judgment and lead them to make bad decisions, like crossing a road in the wrong place, crossing against the light, or "trying to beat a bus that's coming," he said.

## Drinkware that alerts user to tampered drink

A new startup company, DrinkSavvy has developed drinkware that changes colour and pattern in the presence of the common 'date-rape' drugs GHB, ketamine, or Rohypnol.

A 2007 estimate put the number of US women who experience drug-related assault at around 200,000 per year.

Last December, the company raised \$52,000 through a crowdfunding site. Now they are preparing for the first deliveries of their product to backers in September.

Most of the backers are individuals who want the product for personal use, said DrinkSavvy founder Mike Abramson, but the company has since been approached by bar and restaurant owners looking to roll out their drinkware on a larger scale, too.

Currently in the beta-testing phase, the products won't be commercially available until mid-2014.



## Diageo's Sustainability & Responsibility report 2013

In its 11th Sustainability & Responsibility Report, this year Diageo outlines a set of refreshed priorities following a global review. Highlights from Diageo's work in sustainability & responsibility in the past year include 'launching, together with 12 other leading global producers of beer, wine and spirits, a set of commitments to reduce the harmful use of alcohol over five years. In addition, supported over 300 responsible drinking programmes in over 40 countries to combat alcohol misuse'.

[diageo.com/en-ie/newsmedia/pages/resource.aspx?resourceid=1529](http://diageo.com/en-ie/newsmedia/pages/resource.aspx?resourceid=1529)

## Beer Institute releases 2012 State consumption ranking

A new analysis of US beer consumption has been released by the Beer Institute. The annual ranking found that overall, beer consumption rose 1.5% in the United States in 2012 as the economy began to come back after the recession and above normal winter and spring temperatures helped boost beer sales. The five states that consumed the most beer per capita in 2012 were: North Dakota; New Hampshire; Montana; South Dakota; Wisconsin.

[beerinstitute.org/assets/uploads/2012\\_Beer\\_Consumption\\_By\\_State.pdf](http://beerinstitute.org/assets/uploads/2012_Beer_Consumption_By_State.pdf)

## Aware, Awake, Alive programme in the US

Chancellor of California State University, Timothy White, has committed to implementing Aware Awake Alive, a peer-to-peer programme that teaches students how to identify and act on the symptoms of alcohol poisoning, on all 23 CSU campuses. The programme will also translated into Spanish.

According to Erik Fallis, media relations specialist at the CSU said, "The information that is provided through the materials is used to empower students to actually recognize the signs of alcohol poisoning and identify the emergency circumstances." Aware Awake Alive started in 2011 at that campus and has expanded to more than 50 campuses nationwide and a couple in Canada.

The programme is peer-driven, rather than being taught by administrators and teachers. It includes

information about the 9-1-1 legislation, which protects the person who calls emergency services for an underage person who has consumed alcohol.

"This is letting students know that it's more important to help your friend than to worry about getting in trouble," said Kaiwi-Lenting, assistant director for student life and leadership at Cal Poly. "We really try to make sure that students know to call 9-1-1."

Students are also taught how to monitor heart rates, breathing patterns and how to perform CPR if necessary, she said.

Since the programme began at Cal Poly, 43% of students say they intervene when they see something wrong (The national average across college campuses is 33%).

[awareawakealive.org](http://awareawakealive.org)

## Washington State University imposes early-morning Friday classes to combat 'Thirsty Thursday'

Washington State University is introducing new methods for cutting down on binge drinking. Changes include more early-morning Friday classes, more alcohol-free floors in residence halls, and alcohol screening for at-risk students.

Dr Bruce Wright, executive director of WSU's Health and Wellness Services commented "If something as simple as the timing of a student's academic classes will help prevent excessive drinking behaviour, then it's a good science-based practice to implement." Other measures include underage students being subject to parental notification if they are caught violating alcohol or drug policies. University officials are also considering the removal of fraternity freshman housing.

"We know from multiple national studies and local data that freshmen are more likely to experience alcohol-related harm than other students and that freshmen fraternity members are in the highest risk category," Wright added. "The idea is to eventually have all freshmen living in the residence halls where trained personnel are on hand 24/7."

## Turkey to introduce warning labels on containers of alcohol

The Tobacco and Alcohol Market Regulatory Authority (TAPDK) in Turkey has confirmed that warning labels will be placed on alcoholic beverage bottles and packaging within the next ten months.

Three graphics and a written message are to be included on bottles containing alcohol. The graphics relate to consumption under the age of 18, before driving and during pregnancy, while the written message will read, 'Alcohol is not your friend'.

In addition, minors will not be employed in jobs producing, promoting, selling and openly exhibiting alcohol as of June 11, 2014, though studies with educational purposes that have legal permits will be exempt from this regulation.

In accordance with recently-adopted legislation, Turkish retailers and restaurant owners must remove alcohol-related commercial branding from store fronts by September 2013.

## US tribe votes to end alcohol ban

Members of the Oglala Sioux Tribe have voted to end a prohibition on alcohol at the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota.

Spokeswoman Toni Red Cloud said the tribe members had voted 1,871 to 1,670 to end prohibition on the reservation, which is one of the poorest areas in the US. Prohibition has existed on the reservation since it was established in 1889, except for a brief period during the 1970s. The tribal council now needs to decide how to regulate alcohol in the community.

A draft ordinance was circulated before this week's vote, which outline a tribe monopoly on alcohol importation and sale on the reservation, with a new government department to organise tribe-run alcohol shops. The ordinance also called for profits from the sale of alcohol on the reservation to be used to set up detox centres as well as counselling and treatment services.

The law prohibiting alcohol on the reservation has been largely flouted with four alcohol shops located just outside the reservation boundary. Reuters reported that a shop in the town of Whiteclay, which borders the reservation and has a population of around 15, sold the equivalent of 162,100 cases of beer in 2012.

## Taipei New laws result in fewer drunk driving fatalities

Stricter punishment for drunk drivers appears to have reduced casualties as the latest statistics from the Ministry of Transportation and Communications (MOTC) in Taipei showed that deaths from driving-while-intoxicated (DWI) accidents had decreased by 66 from January to June, compared with the same period last year. Both the number of DWI accidents and the number of people killed in DWI accidents were the lowest in six years.

Ministry statistics showed that 131 DWI accidents occurred during the period, killing 137 people. The ministry attributed the decreases to the amendment to Article 185 of the Criminal Code, which stipulates that individuals can face criminal charges if they are found to have a blood alcohol content exceeding 0.25mg/L in a breathalyzer test. Police have also devoted more personnel to targeting drunk drivers.

## New Budweiser campaign backed by research on designated drivers

According to new research from Ipsos Reid that examines the social involvement and acceptance of young adult designated drivers in Canada, there has been a significant shift in the way young people view - and appreciate - designated drivers compared to a generation ago.

Sponsored by Budweiser as part of the launch of its new digital ad campaign that celebrates and thanks the designated driver, the survey revealed that designated driving amongst young adults (aged legal drinking age to 34) is becoming common practice. In fact, the majority have either volunteered to be a designated driver (78%) or have been a passenger in a DD's vehicle (74%) in the past three years.

*"This landmark piece of research revealed that designated driving is evolving as a social norm. We're at the stage where those of legal drinking age to 34 years old are making plans to get home safely and the designated driver is a key piece of the puzzle,"* said John Wright, Senior Vice President, Ipsos Reid. *"This is the first time in our research that we've seen a strong congruency of feelings between designated drivers and passengers - there is a strong, shared empathy and support for the concept of designated driving."*

Key highlights from the survey include:

From the Designated Drivers

- Of the 78% of respondents who have been designated drivers over the past three years, they've done so an average of 19.3 times
- 93% agree that they want to protect their friends by being a designated driver
- 87% agree that when they are a designated driver it's because they want to protect their community
- Only 55% of respondents agree that designated drivers get enough credit for the service they perform.

Of the young adults surveyed

- 93% agree that our communities need more designated drivers
- 89% agree that designated drivers make a difference in their community, similar to those who volunteer to clean up a local park or help out a food bank
- 85% agree that if designated drivers got more credit for what they do, more people would volunteer to be one

Budweiser has launched a new digital ad campaign leading into the August long weekend that thanks and celebrates the designated driver. The spot - aimed at those of legal drinking age to 34 years old - builds on a groundswell of public opinion that designated drivers make an important contribution.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=A5YBYkPNov8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A5YBYkPNov8)

[ipsos-na.com/news-polls/pressrelease.aspx?id=6212](http://ipsos-na.com/news-polls/pressrelease.aspx?id=6212)

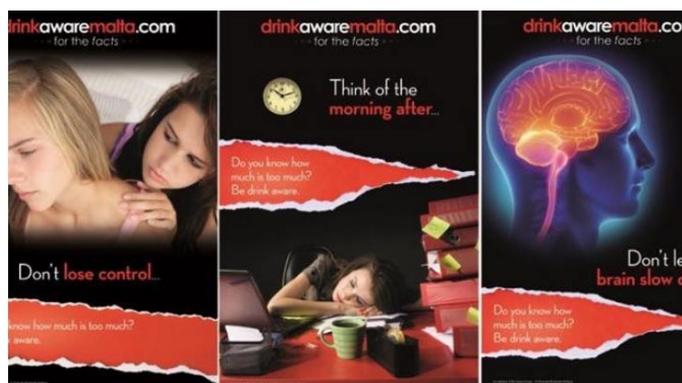


## Malta summer campaign against binge drinking

The Sense Group in Malta has launched a summer campaign highlighting the consequences of binge drinking and the effects of alcohol on the brain. The campaign targets particularly the younger generations.

Consisting of three bold visuals, the publicity is being placed strategically in outdoor locations boards in high traffic areas. In addition to radio commercials, web banners have been created to be placed in popular new portals and social media platforms, including Facebook.

[www.drinkawaremalta.com](http://www.drinkawaremalta.com)



**AIM – Alcohol in Moderation was founded in 1991 as an independent not for profit organisation whose role is to communicate “The Responsible Drinking Message” and to summarise and log relevant research, legislation, policy and campaigns regarding alcohol, health, social and policy issues.**

### **AIM Mission Statement**

- To work internationally to disseminate accurate social, scientific and medical research concerning responsible and moderate drinking
- To strive to ensure that alcohol is consumed responsibly and in moderation
- 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](http://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](http://www.drinkingandyou.com) and publications, based on national government guidelines enabling consumers to make informed choices regarding drinking
- 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 policy makers, legislators and researchers involved in alcohol issues
- To direct enquiries towards full, peer reviewed or referenced sources of information and statistics where possible
- To work with organisations, charities, companies and associations to create programmes, materials and policies built around the responsible consumption of alcohol.

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**Stanton Peele PhD**, US Social Policy Consultant

**Arne Svilaas MD, PhD**, Chief Consultant, Lipid Clinic, Oslo University Hospital, Oslo, Norway.

**Dr Erik Skovenborg**, Scandinavian Medical Alcohol Board

**Creina S Stockley MSc MBA**, Health and regulation, The Australian Wine Research Institute

**Dr Thomas Stuttaford**, Medical Correspondent to The Times and Author

**Dr Elisabeth Whelan**, President of American Council on Science and Health

**David Vauzour PhD**, Senior Research Associate, Department of Nutrition, Norwich Medical School, University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK