

Alcohol Branding May Fuel Drinking, Bingeing

BY MARY ANN MOON

Adolescents who own alcohol-branded merchandise appear more likely to begin drinking and to progress to binge drinking than those who do not, according to a study of more than 6,000 youth.

The researchers described their study as “the first... to examine the longitudinal relationship between [alcohol-branded merchandise] ownership, attitudinal susceptibility, and measures of alcohol use in a multiple-wave study that includes binge drinking as an outcome.” The results “clearly demonstrate that alcohol-branded merchandise ownership is more than a simple marker of an adolescent with favorable attitudes toward alcohol use,” said Dr. Auden C. McClure of the department of pediatrics, Dartmouth Medical School, Hanover, N.H., and associates.

The researchers also found that more than 3 million adolescents across the country own such merchandise—chiefly T-shirts, jackets, hats, and headbands produced predominantly by large beer companies. Teens can buy the items directly at several national chain stores and at mall or beach outlets, as well as be given items by friends and family members.

Dr. McClure and colleagues surveyed 6,522 U.S. teens aged 10-14 years in 2003 concerning health behaviors and media influences. The subjects were reassessed every 8 months for 2 years; the primary behavioral outcomes studied were the transition from never drinking to trying alcohol and the transition from never binge drinking to binge drinking.

The prevalence of owning alcohol-branded merchandise ranged from 11% at 8 months to 20% at 24 months, “which extrapolates to 2.1 to 3.1 million U.S. adolescents.” Most subjects owned branded clothing such as T-shirts and jackets (64%) or headwear (24%), but there also was a wide array of other branded items such as jewelry, key chains, shot glasses, posters, and pens. These adolescents were able to recall the specific alcohol brand on the items in 92% of cases.

A total of 82% of the brands were beer brands, 18% were distilled alcohol brands, and less than 1% were wine brands. A total of 71% of the subjects said the item was a gift from a family member or friend, 24% said they had bought it themselves, and the remainder said they had found the item, won it, or gotten it free as a giveaway at an event.

Ownership of alcohol-branded items led to initiation of alcohol use as well as to initiation of binge drinking, independently of several known social, personality, and environmental risk factors for alcohol use, Dr. McClure and associates said (Arch. Ped. Adoles. Med. 2009;163:211-7).

Owning alcohol-branded merchandise prompted a favorable attitude toward drinking and was associated with exposure to drinking in movies, peer drinking, and personality traits such as sensation seeking and rebelliousness. It was not related to parenting style or parental alcohol use, but was linked with the

teen’s ability to obtain alcohol in the home, which “suggests that alcohol-specific parenting practices may influence ownership” of branded merchandise and subsequent drinking behavior.

Owning alcohol-branded merchandise was not associated with academic performance, parental education level, household income, or television viewing.

In an editorial comment accompanying this report, David H. Jernigan, Ph.D.

of Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Baltimore, noted that a nationwide ban on apparel or other merchandise bearing tobacco brand names was instituted when research demonstrated that such merchandising promoted youth smoking. But no such ban is yet in place for alcohol-branded merchandise—though most states have the power to enact such bans, he said (Arch. Ped. Adoles. Med. 2009;163:278-9).

Dr. Jernigan also said that this “important new evidence... points to an urgent need for action.

“Political will is needed both to improve data collection and reporting and to move toward restrictions that will give people a chance to grow up alcohol free,” Dr. Jernigan wrote, adding that the current study provides important new evidence that points to an urgent need for action.” ■

PSYCHIATRISTS, YOUR PROFESSIONAL LIABILITY INSURER MAY NO LONGER BE SAFE OR SOUND.

MAKE SURE YOUR PROFESSIONAL
LIABILITY INSURANCE
IS PROVIDED BY A COMPANY
WITH AN “EXCELLENT” RATING.
AND DON'T SETTLE FOR
ANYTHING LESS.

YOUR FUTURE COULD
DEPEND ON IT!

Darwin National Assurance Company



Darwin is rated “Excellent” by A.M. Best Co. and anticipates a further upgrade in its rating very soon not a downgrade.

Discounts

- 50% for Part-time
- 10% Claims free
- 50% as a New Graduate
- 5% Risk Management and a discounted course available on our website

(Please call 1-800-421-6694 for complete details on these discounts.)

Endorsed By:



POLICY ADMINISTRATOR

95 Broadway, Amityville, NY 11701

1-800-421-6694

www.americanprofessional.com