



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC ***Alcohol Ads Sway Teens?***

Youth Exposure to Alcohol Advertising in Magazines – United States, 2001-2005

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[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC – safer, healthier people.

[Matthew Reynolds] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly broadcast of the MMWR, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Matthew Reynolds. Underage drinking is the number one contributor to teenage deaths in the United States. As part of an effort to reduce underage drinking, the federal government supports research on teen exposure to alcohol advertising. Georgetown University's Dr. David Jernigan was an author of a recent study that reviewed alcohol advertising and suggests that parents can lessen the risk of their teens' use of alcohol. Dr. Jernigan, welcome to the show.

[Dr. Jernigan] Thank you for having me.

[Matthew Reynolds] How many teenage deaths are attributable to alcohol each year and are these cases due to alcohol poisoning alone?

[Dr. Jernigan] The Surgeon General's estimated that about 5,000 deaths of people under age 21 are the result of underage drinking each year. And, actually alcohol poisoning is just the tip of the ice berg. These deaths are caused by motor vehicle crashes, that's the single largest category, along with other unintentional injuries, like drownings and falls, and actually, much of adolescent homicide and suicide is related to alcohol use.

[Matthew Reynolds] Your study included a review of 250 national magazines with youth exposure to alcohol advertisements. Why magazines and what did you find?

[Dr. Jernigan] The Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth here at Georgetown actually monitors youth exposure to alcohol advertising in magazines, on the radio, and on television - the three major measured media. What we ended up with in our study was about 143 magazines, national magazines, that had alcohol advertising in them, and for which we could get audience data from the industry standard source for such data - a market research company called Media Mark Research, Incorporated. And what we found is that the new alcohol industry standard of 30 percent maximum youth audiences for where they place their advertising *is* having an effect. There's been a substantial decline in advertising in magazines with youth audiences larger than 30

percent of the total magazine audience, but there's still a tremendous amount of alcohol advertising in magazines that are more likely to be read by youth, per capita, than by adults. In fact, over 80 percent of youth exposure to alcohol advertising is in these youth-oriented magazines.

[Matthew Reynolds] National media have reported on another recent MMWR study about a preference among teenagers who drink to reach for liquor over beer and wine. Did your study look at exposure to liquor advertisements?

[Dr. Jernigan] In fact, liquor ads are the single largest category of alcohol advertising in magazines. They were responsible for about two thirds of the advertising and close to 70 percent of youth exposure. But at the same time, advertisements for Alcopops, these new flavored malt beverages, were the most likely to have their advertising in youth-oriented magazines. About 90 percent of the youth exposure to Alcopops advertising came in those magazines.

[Matthew Reynolds] Did any of the advertisements encourage responsible drinking?

[Dr. Jernigan] There's a tiny segment, about three percent of all the ads were primarily 'responsible drinking' messages, but here, as in other studies that our Center has done, we find that youth are completely overwhelmed with product messages about alcohol and that the 'responsibility' advertising is, at best, a drop in the bucket.

[Matthew Reynolds] Based on the findings of your study, what are your recommendations for alcohol advertising in magazines?

[Dr. Jernigan] There's a common sense solution that the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine recommended in 2003 when they looked at the whole issue of underage drinking. They suggested that the industry should move immediately to a 25 percent maximum for where they put there, for youth audiences of the publications where they put their ads, and that they should eventually move towards a 15 percent maximum. Because 15 percent is roughly the population of 12 to 20 years in the general population of 12 and above which is the population that's measured for magazine readership. So a 15 percent maximum would basically say OK just put your ads in places where kids are less likely to be in the reading audience than adults of a legal drinking age. And, of course, this kind of monitoring of youth exposure to alcohol advertising needs to continue. It's expensive; it needs funding from the federal government, which actually, Congress has authorized but not yet appropriated.

[Matthew Reynolds] What advice would you give to the parents of teenagers or even children who are close to being teenagers? What are their options?

[Dr. Jernigan] Well, there's three things that parents need to do. First, we need to be aware, as parents, of how much our kids are drinking and how they're drinking. More than 90 percent of the alcohol consumed by young people is drunk when the drinker is having five or more drinks on a single occasion. Kids use alcohol to get drunk. They're

not having a glass of wine with lunch. So we need to talk to our kids about drinking. We also need to be aware of how much alcohol advertising and promotion our kids are exposed to. Our studies have found that parents are, in fact, the least likely group to be exposed to this kind of advertising. So it's difficult to know how much pressure our kids are under. But, it's very clear from our studies that they see a tremendous amount of it. So we need to be aware of the advertising and talk to our kids about how alcohol advertising will never tell the whole story about adolescent alcohol use. And, then as parents, we also need to say to the alcohol companies – “Look, there's no reason for you to be placing your ads in places where our kids are more likely to see it than we are. We think you can do a better job of how you place your advertising and we think our kids deserve better from you.”

[Matthew Reynolds] Dr. Jernigan, thank you so much for taking the time to share this information with our listeners today.

[Dr. Jernigan] My pleasure.

[Matthew Reynolds] That's it for this week's show. Don't forget to join us next week. Until then, be well. This is Matthew Reynolds for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

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