Population-Level Alcohol Prevention

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Class of 1969

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July 13, 1971
Timeline of Key Events

• **1993** U.S. Department of Education establishes the Higher Education Center for Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Violence Prevention, which promotes *environmental management*

• **1994** Henry Wechsler publishes the first national survey on college student drinking

• **1996** The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation initiates “A Matter of Degree” at 10 major universities

• **2002** The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) publishes “A Call to Action”

• **2004** NIAAA launches a “rapid response” initiative to jumpstart new research on prevention programming

• **2015** NIAAA releases its College Alcohol Interventions Matrix (College-AIM)
The Case for Population-Level Prevention
College Students Drink More Than Their Non-College Peers

Measuring those who have 5+ drinks, 1+ occasions

Student Drinking: Contributing Factors

Expectation that drinking will help bolster confidence and ensure social success

Increased responsibility and stress

Students face major decisions that will direct the course of their academic, professional, and personal lives

Culturally transmitted expectation that young people will drink heavily while in college

Campus-community environment that enables or even facilitates the choice to drink frequently and heavily
The Prevention Paradox

Example: US College Students

Greatest number of negative consequences are experienced by *moderate drinkers*

This is because:
- The number of people at high risk is small.
- Lower levels of alcohol consumption still create a risk of harm

Levels of Prevention

Indicated Prevention

▪ Strategies to identify and intervene with individuals who show early signs of problem drinking or are experiencing specific alcohol-related consequences

Selective Prevention

▪ Strategies applied to a targeted subpopulation at greater risk

Universal Prevention*

▪ Strategies applied to a larger population
Effective Strategies
Population-Level Prevention

• Educational Approaches
  – AlcoholEdu for College

• Normative Approaches
  – Social Norms Marketing

• Policy and Enforcement Approaches
  – Safer California Project
Which Prevention Strategies Work?

A Call to Action
Changing the Culture of Drinking at U.S. Colleges

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)
2002

http://www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov
NIAAA Tier 4 Strategies

A Call to Action: Changing the Culture of Drinking at U.S. Colleges

Tier 4: Evidence of Ineffectiveness

Definition: Research studies demonstrating no impact on behavior

Examples: Mock Car Crash and Alcohol Awareness Week

• Informational, knowledge-based, or values clarification interventions about alcohol and the problems related to its excessive use, *when used alone*

• Providing blood alcohol content feedback to students

Mistaken Interpretation

*Education Doesn’t Work?*

Study Design

Random assignment of 30 universities to treatment (intervention) and control conditions (n = 15 each)

- All intervention group colleges kept, even if they did not properly implement the course

Cross-sectional web-based surveys of randomly selected freshmen

- Baseline (spring), Post-Intervention (fall), and Follow-Up (spring)
- Approximately 90 freshmen per campus per survey

Surveys included past 30-day measures of:

- Frequency of alcohol use
- Heavy episodic drinking (”binge drinking”)
- Alcohol-related problems
Frequency of Heavy Episodic Drinking in Past 30 Days

Baseline          Post-Intervention          Follow-Up

Not Statistically Significant
Impact of poor implementation
Fewer students at follow-up = Weaker power to detect statistical significance

AlcoholEdu
Frequency of Heavy Episodic Drinking in Past 30 Days

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Post-Intervention</th>
<th>Follow-Up</th>
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<td>1.75</td>
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</table>

Percentage of Students Completing AlcoholEdu
- **0-29%**
- **30-69%**
- **≥ 70%**

Spring 2008/09 | Fall 2008/09 | Spring 2009/10
Total Alcohol Problems in Past 30 Days

Not Statistically Significant

Impact of poor implementation
Fewer students at follow-up = Weaker power to detect statistical significance
AlcoholEdu for College appears to reduce the frequency of alcohol misuse and the most common types of alcohol-related problems among freshmen during the fall semester.

AlcoholEdu is more effective for schools with the highest rates of course completion, thus mandating AlcoholEdu is likely to yield the greatest benefits.

Study limitations:
- Universities participating in the study may not be representative of all universities in the U.S.
- Survey response rates were less than optimal.
- Overall AlcoholEdu effects may have been underestimated due to variability in course completion rates.
NIAAA College Matrix (2015)

Effectiveness rating, based on percentage of studies reporting any positive effect:

*** = 75% or more, based on 6 studies
** = 50% to 74%
* = 25% to 49%
x = Less than 25%

Tier 1: Evidence of effectiveness among college students

2 or more favorable studies available (with rigorous methodology)

2002
Population-Level Prevention

• Educational Approaches
  – AlcoholEdu for College

• Normative Approaches
  – Social Norms Marketing

• Policy and Enforcement Approaches
  – Safer California Project
A large, well-funded, and highly visible social norms campaign can counteract an entrenched drinking culture and reduce alcohol-related problems.
Campaign Focus

• Target Audience
  ▪ 1999: Focus on first-year students
  ▪ 2002: Expand messaging to include all undergraduates

• Messages
  ▪ Correct misperceptions about the quantity and frequency of alcohol use
  ▪ Communicate that most students practice protective behaviors:
    – Asking friends to slow down if they are drinking excessively
    – Tending to a friend who has passed out
    – Not allowing an intoxicated friend to drive
    – Using a designated driver or alternative transportation.
Campaign Venues

- **1999:**
  - Monthly series of posters (“Stall Street Journal”)

- **2002:**
  - Parent orientation sessions
  - Weekly campus posters, emails, newspaper ads, and newspaper articles
  - Staff and peer presentations in residence halls, Greek residences, and classrooms.

- **2003:**
  - Small group sessions for fraternity and sorority members and athletes

- **2004:**
  - Annual music event.

- **2005:**
  - Facebook ads
Research Study

• Survey data collected annually, 2001-2006
  ▪ No control group institutions

• No new policies or programs to address student drinking were launched at the institutional, community, or state level during this time
  ▪ Increases the likelihood that any observed changes were due to the campaign and not to other initiatives

• National surveys of college students between 2001 and 2006 showed no decreases or slight increases in several self-reported negative consequences due to alcohol use
  ▪ Compare UVa experience against national trend
Impact of the Campaign

• Percentage of students reporting *no negative consequences (out of 10) due to alcohol use*:
  - 2001: 33%
  - 2006: 51%

• Percentage of students reporting *multiple negative consequences due to alcohol use*:
  - 2001: 44%
  - 2006: 26%

• Percentage of students stating they had *driven under the influence of alcohol*:
  - 2001: 27%
  - 2006: 15%
Population-Level Prevention

• Educational Approaches
  – *AlcoholEdu for College*

• Normative Approaches
  – Social Norms Marketing

• Policy and Enforcement Approaches
  – Safer California Project
College officials should take an active role in giving shape to a campus and community environment that will help students make healthier decisions about drinking.
Environmental Strategies

Create an environment that supports health-promoting norms

Restrict inappropriate marketing and promotion of alcoholic beverages

Offer social, recreational, public service, and other extracurricular options

Develop and enforce campus policies and local, state, and federal laws

Limit alcohol availability and access
Research on US Minimum Legal Drink Age Laws

Wagenaar & Toomey (2002)

Examined research from 1960 to 2000 when various states lowered the legal drinking age and then raised it back to age 21

All 46 high-quality studies that found an effect showed that the age 21 drinking law has saved lives

Case Closed
Age 21 Drinking Law Compliance Checks

Reductions Following Three Waves of Compliance Checks

- Alcohol Sales to Underage Youth: 59% vs. 26%

Reductions Following Quarterly Compliance Checks

- Alcohol Sales to Underage Youth: 28% vs. 10%

Underage Sales in Compliance Check Communities vs. Comparison Sites

- Compliance Check Communities: 45% vs. 47%
- Comparison Communities: 16% vs. 35%

To be effective, compliance checks must be conducted:
- at all establishments
- several times per year

Safer California Project

14 UC and CSU campuses

Matched, and randomly assigned to the intervention group (n = 7) or the control group (n = 7)
Integrated Intervention Strategies for Off-Campus Parties

- Compliance Checks
- DUI Check Points
- Party Patrols
- Pass Social Host “Response Cost” Ordinance
- Social Host Safe Party Campaign
Safer California Universities Project

• Decrease in heavy drinking at targeted sites
  – Off-campus parties
  – Bars and restaurants

• No increase at non-targeted sites
  – No displacement effects

• Stronger effects with more intensive interventions
State-Level Enforcement

• **Problems**
  – Underage sales and service (on-premises and off-premises establishments)
    • Failure to check ID
    • Use of fake ID
  – Overservice (on-premises establishments)

• **There are too few state-level enforcement officers to conduct frequent retailer compliance checks**
Ratio of ABC Enforcement Officers Per 1,000 Alcohol Retail Outlets

Massachusetts
Ratio of ABC Enforcement Officers Per 1 Million Adult Drinkers

An image showing a bar chart with Enforcement Officers Per 1 Million Adult Drinkers for various states. The vertical axis represents the ratio ranging from 0.0 to 100.0. The chart indicates Massachusetts has a high ratio, marked with a blue arrow and labeled. Other states are listed along the x-axis.
Respect 21™
Implemented in 51 Communities in 28 States (2005-2014)

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<td>• Lawrence</td>
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Map showing cities in each state.
Young-Appearing Mystery Shopper Attempts to Purchase Alcoholic Beverage

- Clerk/Server Requests ID
  - Green Card
    - Explains Program and Reinforces Age Verification
  - Red Card
    - Indicates that Staff Failed to Verify Age

Letter to Manager
Summarizes Mystery Shop Outcome and Provides Supporting Materials
Helping Retailers Succeed: Supporting Materials

Licensees receive:

- **Self-Assessment Tool** for examining their current responsible retailing practices
- **H.E.L.P. Guide** based upon the *Best Practices Report* published by the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
- **Signage for customers and staff** to express a licensee’s commitment to respect the age 21 minimum legal drinking age when selling or serving alcoholic beverages
Aggregated ID-Checking Rates

Mystery Shops should continue long term

There is shop-to-shop variability

Less shop-to-shop variability

**Intervention vs. Pre-Intervention, OR = 2.08, (95% CI = 1.58-2.67), p < .001**

**Post-Intervention vs. Pre-intervention, OR = 1.28, (95% CI = 0.92-1.79), p > .05**
Where Are We as a Field?

• We now know what works:
  – Researchers have learned a great deal about the types of policies and programs that are effective in reducing drinking-related problems on campus

• Only a few schools have implemented these evidence-based approaches

• Heavy drinking rates among college students have remained virtually unchanged in recent years
  – They are only modestly lower than 30 years ago
  – Individual institutions have made significant progress
Where Are We as a Field?

• Most colleges and universities give the issue relatively little attention

• Budgets are usually just a few thousand dollars, even at major public universities

• The job is often assigned to a lone staff member in the student affairs office

  – Entry-level staff member trained as a health educator
  – Little experience in strategic planning, community organizing, or media advocacy
  – Little (perceived) power to move the academic bureaucracy.
  – May work on several other health and wellness issues
Causes of Presidential Resistance

- Denial about the scope and severity of the problem
- Fear of bad publicity
- Competing priorities and responsibilities
- Fear of student resistance
- Concerns about an alumni backlash
- Out-of-date legal advice
- Fatalism, due to:
  - Unfamiliarity with the research literature
  - Concerns about displacing the problem off campus
- Resistance to environmental management strategies
  - Failure to understand the “prevention paradox”
  - Preference for focusing on problem drinkers
  - Do not see a need to focus on off-campus behavior
  - Anticipated difficulty of working with community coalitions

Too often it takes a student death or a riot to prompt action...and sometimes even that isn’t enough
How do we overcome presidential resistance to alcohol prevention?

Are Boards of Trustees ready to hold presidents accountable?
Attention Boards of Trustees

• Academic standing (ranking)
• Reputation ("brand identity")
• Educational mission
  – Student performance
  – Faculty recruitment
• Student retention
• Institutional finances
  – Fund-raising
  – Cost reductions
  – Avoiding civil liability

Student health and wellness? Sure, let’s add that, too.
Imagine how different things would be if college presidents were:

• expected to drive down the numbers of students who are heavy drinkers or who act out when using alcohol, and

• held accountable by their Board...and by all of us
Imagine...

• Student health and wellness would be a key priority in the institution’s strategic plan
• Alcohol prevention would be linked to mission-critical priorities (retention, student engagement, student success, financial performance)
• The institution would articulate measurable goals for improving student health and wellness
• Funding for alcohol prevention would a dedicated line item in the budget
• Alcohol prevention would no longer be viewed as the responsibility of a single individual, or even a single department

• There would be a permanent campus-wide task force that reports directly to the vice president for student affairs, if not to the chief executive

• Every office and department would be required to submit a plan for how it could help meet this challenge.

• Faculty no less than administrative staff would have to do their part, giving a boost to academic reform

• There would be new initiatives to help students become better integrated into the intellectual life of the school
Consequences of College Alcohol Use

- **Death**: 1,825 alcohol-related injury deaths among 18-to-24-year-olds
  - 1,357 from motor vehicle crashes
- **Injury**: 599,000 unintentionally injured (18-24)
- **Assault**: More than 696,000 assaulted by another student who had been drinking
- **Sexual Abuse**: More than 97,000 victims of sexual assault or date rape
- **Drunk Driving**: 2.1 million students drove under influence
- **Academic Problems**: About 25 percent of students report academic problems due to alcohol

Source: Hingson et al, 2009
Number and rate of fatal occupational injuries, by industry sector, 2013

<table>
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<th>Industry Sector</th>
<th>Number of Fatal Work Injuries</th>
<th>Fatal Work Injury Rate</th>
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<td>Construction</td>
<td>828</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transportation and warehousing</td>
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<td>Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting</td>
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<td>Government</td>
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Total fatal work injuries = 4,585
All-worker fatal injury rate = 3.3

(per 100,000 full-time equivalent workers)
Dwindling National Resources

U.S. Department of Education
  – Closes the Higher Education Center in 2012

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
  – Switches from major focus on prevention to alcohol treatment

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism
  – No longer has dedicated funding initiatives focused on college-related research
Next Up...

• Yes, we’ve learned a lot about what works, but overall there has been little progress.
• Institutions of higher education need to stop accepting student deaths and injuries as the normal “cost of business.”
• Nothing so focuses the mind of presidents and boards of trustees like a highly visible, multi-million dollar lawsuit...
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