The Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth

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New Research Underscores Need to Reduce Youth Exposure to Alcohol Ads

CAMY Executive Director Hails Landmark Study Showing Alcohol Ads Contribute to Youth Drinking

Washington, DC - A new study shows that seeing alcohol ads increases the likelihood of young people drinking and underscores the importance of reducing youth exposure to alcohol advertising, according to Dr. David Jernigan, executive director of the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth (CAMY) at Georgetown University, in an editorial in the January 2006 edition of the Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine released today.

Jernigan's commentary appears in the same journal that today published research by Dr. Leslie Snyder and four colleagues from the University of Connecticut and Colorado State University showing a link between youth exposure to alcohol ads and drinking.

"There is ample evidence that youth across America are consistently seeing and hearing more alcohol advertising per capita than adults on TV and radio and in print," said Dr. Jernigan. "This study shows alcohol ads are a contributing factor in youth drinking, and that the more alcohol ad spending there is per capita in a market, the more kids drink."

The study, funded by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, is the first-ever national longitudinal survey of the influence of alcohol advertising on youth. Snyder and her colleagues conclude that greater exposure to alcohol advertising contributes to an increase in drinking among underage youth. Specifically, the analysis shows that for underage drinkers, exposure to one more ad than the average for youth was correlated with a 1 percent increase in drinking, and that an additional dollar spent per capita on alcohol advertising in a local market was correlated with a 3 percent increase in underage alcohol consumption as well.

Previous CAMY research has shown that youth between the ages of 12 and 20 often see and hear more alcohol advertising per capita than adults of legal drinking age in magazines and on television and the radio. CAMY is supported by grants from The Pew Charitable Trusts and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to Georgetown University.

"Excessive alcohol use kills over 4,000 kids under age 21 each year. Now we have long-term, peer-reviewed evidence that alcohol ads are contributing to this enormous public health problem," Dr. Jernigan said.

"The new study shows that reducing teen access to alcohol is only one part of the solution. We must also limit the appeal," Jernigan added. "We need to reduce youth exposure to alcohol ads as a necessary and effective step in curbing underage drinking."

In a 2003 report commissioned by the U.S. Congress, the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine concluded that further progress in reducing underage drinking requires "significant new intervention." According to Dr. Jernigan, the study by Dr. Snyder and colleagues suggests that alcohol companies could make a real and substantial contribution to preventing underage drinking by reducing the number of alcohol ads seen by young people.

CAMY and others have recommended that alcohol companies limit ads to programs with youth audiences of less than 15 percent, the proportion of 12- to 20-year-olds in the general population 12 and above. A recent CAMY analysis showed that by adopting this policy change, alcohol companies could reduce youth exposure by 20 percent, with virtually no change in their ability to reach young adults of legal drinking age and with a reduction in their advertising expenditures.

Snyder and her colleagues conducted research via telephone over three years (1999 to 2001) among youth ages 15 to 26 who were randomly selected within 24 of the top 75 media markets in the United States. This is the first national longitudinal study in the United States to demonstrate a link between youth exposure to alcohol advertising and alcohol consumption and is consistent with similar studies in other countries.

For more information about Dr. Jernigan's editorial and the Snyder et al. article in the *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, log on to http://archpedi.ama-assn.org/.

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