

**News Release**

For Immediate Release

July 8, 2014

**Contact:**

Alicia Samuels

914-720-4635

[asamuels@jhu.edu](mailto:asamuels@jhu.edu)

Stephanie Desmon

410-955-7619

[sdesmon1@jhu.edu](mailto:sdesmon1@jhu.edu)

## ***Underage Drinkers Heavily Exposed to Magazine Ads for Alcohol Brands They Consume***

**Baltimore, MD** - Underage drinkers between the ages of 18 and 20 see more magazine advertising than any other age group for the alcohol brands they consume most heavily, raising important questions about whether current alcohol self-regulatory codes concerning advertising are sufficiently protecting young people.

This is the conclusion of a new study from the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth (CAMY) at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health that examined which age groups saw the most magazine advertising for the 25 alcohol brands most popular among underage boys and girls, in contrast with 308 alcohol brands less popular with underage drinkers. Published in the July issue of the *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, it is believed to be the first paper to examine whether youth exposure to magazine alcohol advertising is higher for the brands they frequently consume.

Alcohol advertising in the U.S. is primarily regulated by the industry itself through a voluntary code; according to the code, alcohol ads should be placed only in magazines where less than 30 percent of the readers are younger than 21.

“Eighteen- to 20-year-olds experience one of the highest rates of excessive alcohol use and alcohol use disorders among all age groups,” says study author and CAMY director David Jernigan, PhD. “This study adds to the growing evidence that exposure to alcohol advertising may be related to drinking and, importantly, suggests a relationship between advertising exposure and consumption of specific brands.”

At least 14 studies have found that the more young people are exposed to alcohol advertising and marketing, the more likely they are to drink, or if they are already drinking, to drink more. In 2011, alcohol advertisers spent more than 250 million dollars on magazine advertising in the U.S.

In the new study, the researchers used national magazine readership data to identify which age groups received the greatest exposure to advertising for the top brands consumed by underage males and females.

The researchers found that many of the brands most popular among underage drinkers included 18 to 20 year-olds in the groups most heavily exposed to their advertising. For males, it was 17 of the top 25 brands (68 percent), while 11 brands actually exposed 18-to-20-year-olds more heavily than any other age group. For females, 18 of the top 25 brands (72 percent) included 18- to 20 year-olds in the groups most heavily exposed to their advertising, while 16 of these brands delivered greater advertising exposure to 18- to 20-year-olds than to any other age group.

“Overall, the top 25 brands consumed by underage males were more than nine times more likely to include males ages 18 to 20 in their most heavily exposed group, and the top 25 brands consumed by underage females were more than five times more likely to include females ages 18 to 20 in their most heavily exposed group,” says lead study author and CAMY consultant Craig Ross, PhD. “Young people, and especially young females, still read magazines, and the alcohol brands youth are being over-exposed to via magazine advertisements are the same brands they are choosing to drink.”

The authors note that none of the ads included in the study violated the 30-percent standard despite the fact that 18- to 20-year-olds were the most heavily exposed age group for some of the brands they are most likely to consume.

“The fact that we see these high levels of exposure to magazine advertising among underage readers despite all of the magazine advertisements being in compliance with alcohol industry self-regulatory codes clearly shows current self-regulatory guidelines are not protective of youth,” Ross says. “With alcohol the number one drug among youth, and responsible for 4,300 deaths per year, it’s time to ask ourselves what more can be done in the interest of our nation’s young people.”

The National Research Council, Institute of Medicine and 24 state and territorial attorneys general have encouraged adoption of a 15-percent standard, based on the proportion of the population between the ages of 12 and 20, the group most at risk of underage drinking.

“Youth Alcohol Brand Consumption and Exposure to Brand Advertising in Magazines” was written by Craig S. Ross PhD, MBA, Joshua Ostroff, Michael B. Siegel MD, MPH, William DeJong PhD, Timothy S. Naimi MD, MPH, and David H. Jernigan PhD.

###

*This research was supported by a grant from the National Institutes of Health’s Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (5R01AA020309).*

*The Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth monitors the marketing practices of the alcohol industry to focus attention and action on industry practices that jeopardize the health and safety of America’s youth.*

*The Center was founded in 2002 at Georgetown University with funding from The Pew Charitable Trusts and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The Center moved to the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in 2008 and is currently funded by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For more information, visit <http://www.camy.org>.*