

TV ads entice kids to drink alcohol: study

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(Medical Xpress) -- Efforts to reduce alcohol-related harm in Australia are being frustrated by high levels of alcohol advertising on television, particularly at times when children are likely to be watching, according to new research led by The University of Western Australia.

In a two-month study, researchers found that of 2810 [alcohol](#) advertisements worth \$15.8 million shown in five capital cities, about half were screened at times when at least 25 per cent of possible child viewers were likely to be watching.

The findings, published in the *Drug And Alcohol Review* by the Australian Professional Society on Alcohol and other Drugs, show that TV ads are likely to encourage young people to view alcohol as an

inexpensive product closely associated with fun, friendship and physical activity, and best bought in bulk.

Lead researcher Professor Simone Pettigrew, Director of UWA's Health Promotion Evaluation Unit, said the study posed serious questions for public policy makers and health practitioners seeking to change public attitudes to alcohol as a "normal and safe aspect of life".

The study involved researchers from UWA, the University of Adelaide and the Cancer Council, and was funded by the Australian Government and Cancer Council of New South Wales.

Professor Pettigrew said the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) found that "alcohol consumption is especially hazardous for young people under 18 years of age and that alcohol initiation should be delayed for as long as possible".

"The Alcohol and Beverages [Advertising](#) Code states that 'advertisements must not encourage excessive consumption or abuse of alcohol,'" Professor Pettigrew said.

"However, our study shows the emphasis in many of the analysed advertisements on value for money and buying in bulk may contravene the spirit - if not the letter - of the Code.

"These messages also undermine the NHMRC's current stance on minimising alcohol consumption."

Professor Pettigrew's findings noted that Australian Government Children's [Television](#) Standards banned [alcohol advertising](#) during dedicated children's program times.

"However, half of all alcohol ads were shown during programming that

is commonly viewed by both adults and children," Professor Pettigrew said.

This was despite attempts by the Australian Government Children's Standards to minimise children's exposure to advertising and earlier findings by other researchers that teenagers under legal drinking age were exposed to the same number of [alcohol advertisements](#) as adults.

"In another study of 30 alcohol advertisements to which children were most frequently exposed, all contained at least one element that was particularly appealing to children," Professor Pettigrew said.

"Appreciating the role of advertising in influencing the development of alcohol-related social norms is especially important in designing appropriate strategies to change community attitudes.

"The present study demonstrates that current advertising practices are likely to be reaching and influencing many children, and therefore require careful consideration in future policy development."

Provided by University of Western Australia

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