

Study shows kids influenced by sport ads for alcohol, fast food

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The impact on children of alcohol and fast-food advertising in sports sponsorship is concerning health experts at The University of Western Australia.

They have demonstrated for the first time that children are likely to be subconsciously absorbing multi-million dollar sports sponsorship messages.

Professor Simone Pettigrew was a co-author of a paper on the topic which was published recently in the journal *Public Health Nutrition*.

With her UWA colleagues she designed a study to capture the effects of the likely substantial subconscious [effects of alcohol](#) and fast-food manufacturers' efforts to associate their products with healthy sport via sponsorship.

More than 160 children aged from five to 12 were invited to take part in an activity that assessed their conscious and subconscious associations between sporting teams and a range of sponsors. The researchers found that more than three-quarters of the children aligned at least one correct sponsor with the relevant sport. More than half correctly matched an Australian Football League team with its relevant sponsor, a fast-food chain.

"Given the unstructured nature of the task, the results provide support for the argument that sports sponsorship effectively reaches child

audiences," the authors write.

"While sponsors may argue that they are not intentionally targeting children, it is clear that their efforts are producing this 'unintended' consequence and that as a result they should come under closer scrutiny.

"There is potential for children to become confused if [healthy lifestyle](#) messages or imagery are promoted by the marketers of unhealthy products. Limiting children's exposure to sponsorship messages of companies promoting [unhealthy food](#) and drinks is an important element of public policy efforts to reduce [child obesity](#)."

Provided by University of Western Australia

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