

CAMH policy study outlines ways to reduce alcohol harms

June 18 2013

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) has released a summary report outlining policy strategies to reduce the harms related to alcohol, with a focus on the province of Ontario, Canada.

In the report titled 'Reducing [Alcohol](#)-Related Harms and Costs in Ontario: A Provincial Summary Report,' CAMH Senior Scientist Norman Giesbrecht outlines Ontario's policy strengths and provides recommendations to help decrease the \$2.9 billion attributed annually to the direct and indirect costs of alcohol use in Ontario.

"While there are policy measures in place, there is still work to be done in various areas, such as alcohol pricing and advertising in order to address [drinking](#) behaviours that can be harmful," said Dr. Giesbrecht. "For instance, we know that more than 75 per cent of Ontarians consume alcohol, and that approximately 22 per cent of Ontarians drink above the recommended drinking guidelines."

Positioning alcohol use as a public health matter, Dr. Giesbrecht is recommending 10 policy improvements:

- Adjusting alcohol prices to keep pace with inflation, preventing alcohol prices from becoming cheaper relative to other goods over time.
- Maintain government-run monopolies which regulate access to alcohol by maintaining effective alcohol control strategies such as enforcement of the [legal drinking age](#), the regulation of

pricing, and hours and days of sale.

- Consider increasing the minimum legal drinking age to 21 years of age.
- Limiting the availability of alcohol by reducing the hours of operation, starting with LCBO licensed agency stores in smaller [rural communities](#).
- Strengthening drinking and driving regulations by lengthening license suspension periods, particularly for [repeat offenders](#), and impounding vehicles during suspension.
- Prohibiting the advertisement of price or sales incentives by all alcohol retailers and tightening restrictions on sponsorship, specifically those targeting youth and [young adults](#).
- Ontario is encouraged to support a consistent physician screening, referral and brief intervention protocol by implementing a fee for service code that is specific to these activities.
- The Smart Serve Responsible Beverage Service program is encouraged to incorporate scenario-based activities into its training program and to require periodic retraining.
- Implement mandatory alcohol warning labels on alcohol packaging that include topics relevant to alcohol use such as drinking and driving, the risks of underage drinking, and chronic diseases.
- Develop a provincial alcohol strategy that emphasizes alcohol specific policies and interventions that have been recommended by the World Health Organization.

"In order to refine and implement these recommendations it will require leadership, commitment to reducing alcohol-related harms and a spirit of collaboration among key stakeholders," said Dr. Giesbrecht.

Provided by Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

Citation: CAMH policy study outlines ways to reduce alcohol harms (2013, June 18) retrieved 4 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-06-camh-policy-outlines-ways-alcohol.html>

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