

# Alcohol intervention programs ineffective on fraternity members

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Interventions designed to reduce alcohol use among fraternity members are no more effective than no intervention at all, according to an analysis of 25 years of research involving over 6,000 university students published by the American Psychological Association.

"Current intervention methods appear to have limited effectiveness in reducing alcohol consumption and alcohol-related problems among fraternity and possibly sorority members," said lead researcher Lori Scott-Sheldon, PhD, of The Miriam Hospital and Brown University. "Stronger interventions may need to be developed for student members of Greek letter organizations."

The study appears in the journal *Health Psychology*, which is published by APA.

The researchers conducted a meta-analysis of 15 studies looking at 21 different interventions involving 6,026 total participants (18 percent women) who were members of fraternities and sororities. They found no significant difference between students who received an intervention and those who did not for alcohol consumption per week or month, frequency of heavy drinking, frequency of drinking days or alcohol-related problems. In some cases, alcohol consumption even increased after an intervention.

Alcohol use is common among U.S. college students, but especially among those in fraternities and sororities, according to the study. It also

notes that members of the Greek system consume higher quantities of alcohol, report more frequent drinking and experience more alcohol-related consequences compared to students outside the Greek system. Other meta-analyses of similar alcohol interventions among college students in general suggest that they are capable of significantly decreasing alcohol use.

Scott-Sheldon said she and her colleagues were surprised by the findings. "We expected that providing Greek members with a thoughtfully designed and carefully administered alcohol intervention would reduce consumption and problems relative to no intervention," she said.

One reason for the unexpected findings could be the nature of fraternity and sorority life, said Scott-Sheldon. Changing patterns of alcohol use by members of these organizations may be more difficult than changing them among regular university students because these students are part of an environment in which alcohol plays a central social role.

"Reducing alcohol consumption and problems among fraternity and sorority members will require a different strategy relative to their college drinking peers," said Scott-Sheldon. "Additional research is needed to determine the best approach to reduce alcohol misuse among members of Greek letter organizations."

It is important to note that since only 18 percent of the participants in the studies represented in the meta-analysis were women, and no single study focused exclusively on sororities, the findings may only be applicable to members of fraternities, according to Scott-Sheldon.

"Given the lack of research with sorority members, our findings may not be generalizable to all members of Greek organizations. More research is needed to determine the efficacy of alcohol interventions specifically for sorority members," she said.

**More information:** "Alcohol Interventions for Greek Letter Organizations: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis, 1987 to 2014," by Lori Scott-Sheldon, PhD and Michael Carey, PhD, Centers for Behavioral and Preventive Medicine, The Miriam Hospital and Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior, Brown University; Kate Carey, PhD, Brown School of Public Health; and Tyler Kaiser, BA, and Jennifer Knight, BA, Centers for Behavioral and Preventive Medicine, The Miriam Hospital, Providence, RI. *Health Psychology*, published online May 16, 2016.

Provided by American Psychological Association

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