

Parents beware: Kids exposed to many hours of alcohol use in PG-13 movies

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Children are exposed to many hours of alcohol use in movies, especially films rated PG-13, a new study shows.

The study, a nationally representative sample of 6,522 adolescents ages 10 to 14 years, looked at alcohol use and brand appearances in 534 popular movies during a 5 ½-year period.

"Movie alcohol exposure could influence adolescents' beliefs about drinking, making them more likely to use alcohol," said Sonya Dal Cin, an assistant professor of the University of Michigan's Department of Communication Studies and the study's lead author.

Previous studies have analyzed movies for alcohol content, but this latest study also estimated youth exposure to alcohol brand appearances in movies.

The study's authors analyzed alcohol depictions of 100 U.S. box office hits each year from 1998 to 2002 and 34 top movies from early 2003. They looked at the use of beer, wine or liquor in the film, if any character became intoxicated, how long alcohol was consumed, and appearances of alcohol brands in the films. PG-13 is considered a sterner warning than a PG rating by the Rating Board to parents to determine whether their children under age 13 should view the movie, as some material might not be suited for them.

From the sampled movies, about 83 percent depicted alcohol use and 52

percent contained at least one alcohol brand appearance. These movies exposed the average adolescent to 5.6 hours of alcohol use and nearly 244 brand appearances.

Dal Cin said the highest alcohol exposure is from PG-13 movies, which had as much content as R-rated movies.

"G/PG movies still have more alcohol-related content than one might expect given the target audience, but there are fewer G/PG movies," she said. The researchers combined G and PG movies, due to the small number of G-rated movies and similar alcohol content in these two rating categories

PG-13 or R movies were more likely to depict alcohol use than G and PG rated movies. The study indicated the median duration of alcohol use per movie was 2 minutes, 16 seconds.

Actors appeared intoxicated in 40 percent of PG-13 and R movies compared with 15.2 percent of G/PG movies.

G and PG movies were less likely to contain an alcohol brand appearance than movies rated PG-13 or R—and 64 percent of all appearances were in the scene's background. Verbal mentions of alcohol brand names occurred less frequently at 6 percent of all movies, the study shows.

The researchers also looked at several factors, including race, influencing exposure to alcohol use in movies. African-American youth were exposed to more alcohol use in movies than Hispanic, Caucasian and other viewers.

The findings appear in the current issue of *Addiction*.

Provided by University of Michigan

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