Alcohol Ads: Easy for Kids to Swallow

Researchers from the University of Wollongong have found that Australians aged 15-24 believe that alcohol advertisements tell them that drinking alcohol will help them have a great time, fit in with their peers, feel more confident, and be more attractive to the opposite sex.

Research shows that alcohol advertising is attended to, remembered, and liked by children and adolescents. Studies in the US show that the more alcohol advertisements kids see, the more likely they are to believe that drinking has positive consequences; accept high levels of alcohol intake by their peers; have greater intentions to drink in the future; and have higher levels of alcohol consumption themselves.

Australia has a strong social drinking ethic, and binge drinking for teenagers has long been seen as a rite of passage that is not only acceptable but normal. However, Professor Jones from the Centre for Health Initiatives at the University of Wollongong is concerned that Australians are ignoring the immediate risks associated with teenage alcohol usage. “Every year over 250 young people aged between 15 and 24 years die from alcohol attributed injury and disease. This is an alarming statistic, and it’s time that something is done.” Dr Jones believes that one way to tackle the issue is to improve the regulation of alcohol advertising to protect young people from inappropriate messages about alcohol consumption.

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