



Michigan Council on Alcohol Problems

MICAP / RECAP

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AADIF / MICAP

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The Addiction Business Model And The Harm It Causes

By Janine Kravetz
MICAP Board Member

ADDICTIVE • ADVERTISING • AGE • AVAILABILITY • AFFORDABLE

The tobacco industry is well known for its controversial marketing tactics that have made it one of the largest commercial successes of our time. They have in fact invented a perfect model of intergenerational addiction which is now practiced by other industries that include alcohol, marijuana, opioid medications, gambling and even processed foods. While the tobacco industry has been regulated and held to levels of transparency about the harms of their products, the addiction model is still spreading and succeeding.

The first part of this Addiction Business Model is the five A's. It begins with having an **ADDICTIVE** product. These products include the above mentioned items, and most of them have also become increasingly potent and therefore often more addictive than their earlier counterparts. One example would be spikes in Alcohol By Volume content (ABV) in many beverages spurred on by the rise of the craft beer and cocktail industry.

Next comes the **ADVERTISING** of the product. In addition to traditional media outlets such as television, radio or billboard ads, we now have numerous social media channels, most of which cater to specific populations or age groups. **AGE** is also critical component of the addiction strategy and how advertising is used to influence decisions among young people. These companies know that if the nation's youth turn away from their products that their industries will subsequently decline. In the past, Fred and Wilma Flintstone as well as Santa Claus were advertising cigarettes, and today social media is teeming with celebrity endorsements. Commercials for sugary cereals are shown on Nickelodeon and fruit flavored vapes are attracting younger people to a habit that they have been falsely led to believe is safe and non-addictive. Even adults are falling victim to the lure of advertising, such as alcohol marketing campaigns targeting women during Women's History Month.

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The **AVAILABILITY** of addictive products is a critical environmental risk factor for excessive use. The regulation of the outlet density for retail cigarette and alcohol sales is widely varied, and the legalization of marijuana retail hubs adds new challenges. Addictive products are widely available at gas stations, gambling apps are accessible from any smart phone, marijuana can now be home-delivered, and more than 200 million opioid painkiller prescriptions are written every year.

The last 'A' of the model is in making products **AFFORDABLE**. In its efforts to lure younger smokers, the tobacco industry literally gave cigarettes away with coupons and BOGO deals, well aware they would recoup their money over the lifetimes of the newly addicted. Even a single can of beer can cost less than a 12 oz. Coca-Cola at some retailers.

The second part of this addiction business model is the 4 marketing tactics used. The first of these tactics is to hide addictive substances in seemingly innocent products such as extra nicotine in vape products or the THC level in cannabis gummies. The second tactic is to persuade users to try the addictive product enough times to condition the reward cells to crave/create irrational urges to use. This is encouraged through the use of reward programs/coupons, purchase points, free samples or adding new flavors (Hardee's once partnered with a Nashville-based brewery to create a strawberry-biscuit flavored beer).

The next tactic is to give the product fantasy values to conceal harm and deepen identification. The Marlboro Man and "you've come a long way baby" helped to engage the need to belong, and today e-cigarettes are promoted as a "healthier" alternative despite the fact they are still highly addictive and pose serious health risks. The last tactic is to surround the user with cues to trigger involuntary cravings and compulsive use. Think of the plethora of advertising we see everywhere we look; along our highways, at sporting events, and in TV commercials. The candy and processed foods at checkout lanes are a commonplace example of this.

Having knowledge of this business model can help steer the development of evidence-based research and provide effective counter-reasoning to combat these strategies in a compelling and positive manner. It is also important for all of us to educate ourselves and our children about our own susceptibility to outside influences and our ability to think critically and make informed decisions.

Alcohol Policy Update

In 2022, the Michigan Legislature increased access and availability of alcohol. Some of the law changes included:

- Bars in public pools are now permitted.
- 17 year olds can now serve alcohol at a bar or restaurant (you had to be age 18 previously).
- 16 year olds can now stock the alcohol displays at stores (you had to be age 18 previously).
- Self service alcohol dispensing machines are now permitted.
- Social drinking districts have become permanent.

On a positive note, closing time for the sale of alcohol did not change to 4:00 a.m. and closing time remains 2:00 a.m. In addition, cocktails to go did not become permanent and the sunset on this policy is January 1, 2026. MICAP continues to educate the Michigan Liquor Control Commission and the Michigan Legislature about evidence-based strategies to reduce excessive alcohol consumption and related harms. In the next legislative session, MICAP hopes that legislation will be introduced that would raise alcohol taxes and legislation is introduced to lower the blood alcohol content limit for drunk driving from .08 to .05 (as Utah has done). Please contact us if you are interested in helping MICAP achieve these policy goals.

Anticipatory Grief

A poem by Tom Watkins

Tom Watkins has worn many hats in a long career, trumpeting the need for better care and more facilities for Michigan's mentally ill. The tragic consequences of this ongoing public health crisis have impacted Tom both professionally and personally. He is open about the fact that he had two brothers who committed suicide, and a son Daniel, who struggled with alcohol addiction for most of his life before dying on February 17, 2022 at the age of 37. Tom Watkins was devastated by the loss of his son, but rather than retreating into a personal shell of suffering, he has vowed to "continue to speak out about these matters, because it matters. Silence, shame, and stigma are enemies, and only by demanding change can we get change to come."

Anticipatory Grief

Forlorn and Foreshadowed

The anticipation
of my son arriving
as a new born
was invigorating

May 15, 1985,
the first day
Daniel was alive

Seven weeks later
I thought it was the end
During a July fourth celebration
on the National Mall
when our son
took a mighty fall
after visiting his great grandma

At first, medical personnel
speculated it could be
bacterial meningitis
I could think of nothing worse

Pre-internet in 1985, I relied on
medical dictionaries for
information to hopefully
calm my fears

My heart sank when I read:
"Bacterial meningitis is serious
Meningitis is an infection
of the membranes
that protect the
spinal cord and the brain
When the membranes become
infected, they swell,

putting pressure on the spinal
cord or brain
It is serious and
can be life-threatening"

My heart stops.
I continue reading:
"Meningitis symptoms strike
suddenly and worsen quickly
Some people with the infection
die and death can occur
in as little as a few hours"

Oh, no. God NO!

Turns out, after 7
excruciating days
in Children's Hospital in
Washington, D.C.,
it was "only"
viral meningitis,
the less lethal kind,
and our little Daniel
would be fine

Daniel survived
and thrived as a child

From that moment on
I was afraid
Daniel would die

February 18, 2022,
my long-standing fear
became a reality
Daniel died from complications
with addiction
Alcoholism finally did him in

My dreaded fear came true
The pain, unless you are a
member of the club
no one wants to join,
of losing a child
is painful to explain

In the days since,
memories, both good and bad,
together with the emotional pain
have been part of my daily grind

Grief, it is as cathartic
as it is a bitch

With each passing day,
the pain subsides
or does it simply hide
Because, when I think I am
moving through the grief,
I find myself back in the thick of
it

Along with the grief, there is
hope,
my convictions and my beliefs
I know these will help
me through it

I anticipate better days
My faith will see me through it

Breathe in gratitude, exhale joy

Tom Watkins
10/6/2022



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You can help us reach our goals in 2023.

The Michigan Council on Alcohol Problems is privileged to benefit from the funding and resources recently made available to us through the Coalition Community Change Program Grant. Building our capacity to engage more supporters, inform on the consequences of substance misuse and influence impactful legislation is at the core of our mission to reduce the harm associated with alcohol and drugs. Yet we cannot do this alone.

Your ongoing support can take various forms and we encourage you to contact us about ways you can help us reach our goals. Just email us at info@micap.org if you are interested in any of these opportunities.

- If you have a passion for advocacy and public policy, consider becoming a legislative advocacy volunteer for MICAP in your voting district.
- The expansion of our Board of Directors calls for a diverse set of talents, experiences, and connections. If you or someone you know might be interested in serving MICAP in this or other potential support roles, please contact us. We would love to hear your ideas.
- As part of our continued efforts to introduce and promote MICAP as a long-trusted source of information, we welcome the opportunity to present our mission and opportunities to get involved. If your congregation, coalition or community group would like to hear more about who we are and what we do, email us!

The advancement of this work is only made possible through the generous donations of our readers and supporters. We hope you will include MICAP in your charitable giving for the year ahead so that we may continue to fight for common sense public policies and reduce the harm that substance abuse inflicts in our communities.

Please use the enclosed envelope to remit your gift. MICAP is grateful for your support.

Visit us online at micap.org.