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*Michigan Council on Alcohol Problems
Celebrating its 111th Anniversary in 2016*

A DRINK A DAY OF BEVERAGE ALCOHOL IS GOOD FOR YOU: TRUE OR FALSE?

By Rev. W. J. (Bill) Amundsen, Retired
Treasurer, MICAP Board of Directors

THE PROVOKING INCIDENT

My wife and I recently sat in the company of college-educated adults for a lunch when the topic of conversation turned to the benefits of Beverage Alcohol (B/A). "It's good for the heart," said one man. A woman responded, "It's a good relaxant to help you sleep." Clearly the group had bought in to the media's and liquor industry's messaging to our culture.

I tried to suggest that while there may be some benefits to a glass, a bottle, or a shot of B/A, there were also side effects arising from its toxic qualities; namely that it could also be cancer-producing.

Suddenly, from the other end of the table came the words, "That's poppycock! That's like the message that came out years ago about turkeys causing cancer about three or four weeks before Thanksgiving." At that eruption (and it was an eruption), the conversation suddenly veered away from B/A and my effort to shed some light was summarily dismissed.

Since that time, I have explored the benefits and detriments of the MODERATE use of B/A. What follows are the best conclusions I can make as a layperson working through a complex body of literature.

THE ONLY SUGGESTED DRINKING PATTERN IS DRINKING IN MODERATION

There are no studies suggesting any help from B/A if the amount of alcohol consumed exceeds the MODERATE recommendation offered by the Center for Disease Control. Those guidelines are as follows:

- Women: No more than 1 standard drink per day (see below).
- Men: (Adult to age 65) No more than 2 standard drinks per day (see below).
- Men: (Over 65) No more than 1 standard drink per day (see below).
- Those who should not drink:
 - Those under 21 years of age
 - Women who are pregnant or actively trying to become pregnant
 - Persons taking medications which would be contraindicated with B/A
 - Persons with addictions to B/A
 - Persons whose health issues contraindicate the use of B/A

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- Persons engaged in highly-skilled and/or dangerous work (including driving)
- Those who take part in binge-drinking

Standard Drinks in the USA (as listed by the CDC):

- One 12-ounce bottle of beer
- One 5-ounce glass of wine
- One 1.5-ounce shot of liquor

IS MODERATE DRINKING BENEFICIAL?

There are a great many studies (literally, hundreds) that support moderate drinking, following the CDC guidelines (above). Those studies tell us that using a moderate approach will be beneficial to our health. Among other things, they suggest a reduced risk to our cardio-vascular systems, of Type 2 diabetes, of dementia, of re-occurrence of breast cancer, in our mortality rate (we'll live longer) and of Alzheimer's. But watch out! Those same studies are telling us that moving from MODERATE DRINKING to HEAVY DRINKING negates all the benefits. Indeed, a heavier drinking pattern is viewed as the cause of the diseases and the consequences we would least enjoy such as illness, discomfort, harm, death, or causing harm or death to another.

WHAT ARE THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF DRINKING B/A?

What are the negative effects of using B/A? My comment in the restaurant was the sharing of facts. There is a close correlation between using B/A and the incidence of cancer of the mouth, the pharynx, the larynx, the esophagus, the stomach, the bowel, the rectum, breast cancer and uterine cancer. Not surprising, the mucous membranes lining most of these parts of the body are markedly affected by the ravages of the ethanol in the B/A.

Other huge negative effects relate to the social fabric of our families, communities, workplace, state, nation and world. Spousal and family abuse rank high among families in which alcohol is abused. B/A also has some effect on about one-third of all crimes committed. Our criminal justice system is increasingly costing our nation (and our taxpayers) billions of dollars annually. Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (see our February 2016 issue of *MICAP-RECAP*) damages unborn children for a lifetime and raises the cost to our nation in dollars as well as to our human potential and suffering. Highway harm and death, as well as death by

disease, contribute to this exorbitant cost in dollars. As said above, it also takes its toll on our citizenry.

MICAP'S STANCE IS A TEMPERANCE STANCE

Admittedly, the Michigan Council on Alcohol Problems is a temperance organization.

We do not push PROHIBITION. But neither do we encourage imbibing B/A. Part of our Mission Statement reads as follows: **"MICAP exists to awaken the Michigan public to the destructive consequences of the use of beverage alcohol, and offer positive solutions."** Besides publishing the *Journal of Alcohol and Drug Education (JADE)* and issuing this newsletter six times a year, our work consists of contacting the Michigan Legislature and the U.S. Congress regarding legislation on which they are working, i.e. bills which have been introduced into those bodies. Our primary intent is to support bills which would be positive regarding B/A in the public realm, and to hinder those bills which would cause more harm to our society. An example of a bill offering a positive help to public policy is our PRO-stance on the Michigan Bill which lowered alcohol content for ALCOPOPS sold in Michigan. An example of a bill on which we took an ANTI-stance is the extension of the sales hours of B/A in bars, restaurants and off-premise stores. We were pleased that those two bills passed and failed respectively.

HUGE FLAW IN "BENEFICIAL" STUDIES FOUND BY CANADIAN RESEARCHER

It's been several years now since the earlier studies touting the advantages of B/A were published and pushed by the liquor industry. More recently however, most of those studies have been called into question. For a valid statistical analysis, all studies must be done according to rigid statistical standards. However, the lead researcher at the University of Victoria's Center for Addiction Research (Canada) and others have found a flaw in 74 out of 87 studies which were touting health benefits by including a moderate amount of B/A in our diets. Those 74 studies all included a contaminated control group. All of those 74 control groups included former problem drinkers who were [at that time] abstaining. But there could be more illness and death in a control group because part of them had poor health in the first place which may have arisen from their previous drinking. Further, the other 13 studies of the original 87 had screened the control groups and excluded previous problem (unhealthy?) drinkers. These studies

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Effects of Illegal Drugs on the Heart

This is the 3rd installment of a longer article by the same title. It is reprinted with permission of the author, David Patterson, ACLS Training Center (<https://www.acls.net/david-bio.html>).

Rohypnol

Rohypnol is a powerful central nervous system depressant that is commonly referred to as a "club drug" or "date-rape drug." These white tablets are also frequently referred to as "roofies." It is odorless and colorless and has been given the label of a date-rape drug because it can easily be slipped into a drink for the purpose of sexual assault. The victim often has little, if any, recollection of the events. It is also used as a sedative to cause people to sleep and to reduce anxiety. It has many side effects, including difficulty breathing, headache, vomiting and nausea, mood swings, and memory loss. When combined with other drugs, particularly depressants, it can affect the heart by causing it to slow down severely. In extreme cases, Rohypnol may result in coma or death.

- Rohypnol (http://brown.edu/Student_Services/Health_Services/Health_Education/alcohol,_tobacco,_&_other_drugs/rohypnol.php)
- Date Rape Drugs: XTC, Rohypnol, Ketamine (<http://oade.nd.edu/educate-yourself-drugs/rohypnol-flunitrazepam/>)
- Drug Facts: Rohypnol (<http://www.justthinktwice.com/drugs/rohypnol.html>)
- The Truth About Club Drugs (<http://ojp.gov/docs/clubdrug.pdf>)
- Drug Fact Sheet: Depressants (http://www.pai.wv.gov/programsanddepartments/DEC/Documents/depressants_DrugDataSheet.pdf)

LSD

Lysergic acid diethylamide, or LSD, is a powerful illegal drug that when used alters how people perceive reality. Classified as a hallucinogen, the drug is taken as a tablet or capsule. In liquid form, LSD may be placed on items such as stamps, gelatin sheets, or small squares of paper. Once the medium is dried, the user licks the LSD from the stamp, paper, etc. The drug affects the heart

by causing an increase in both the user's heart rate and their blood pressure. If the dosage is high enough, heart failure may occur, resulting in death. In addition to how it affects the heart and hallucinations, there are other side effects of LSD that include appetite loss, dry mouth, sweating, elevated body temperatures, mood swings and dilated pupils.

- LSD (<http://www.gmu.edu/resources/facstaff/facultyfacts/1-2/lsd.html>)
- LSD (Acid) (<http://sampson.washcoll.edu/~agolinski2/Final%20Project/Drug%20websites%20%28in%20sharepoint%29/LSD.htm>)
- Drugs and Health Risks (<http://www.southalabama.edu/counseling/healthrisks.html>)
- Health Risks and Effects of Drug Usage (<http://www.stetson.edu/law/offices/safety/media/health-risks-and-effects-of-drug-usage-and-penalties-pdf.pdf>)
- Hallucinogens (LSD) (<http://wellbeing.rice.edu/drugs/#pos11>)
- Center for Substance Abuse Research - LSD (<http://www.cesar.umd.edu/cesar/drugs/lsd.asp>)

Last part of this article will be printed in the next issue.

Our Speaker's Bureau

If your group or church or class/school would like to hear something more about MICAP, or Alcohol Problems in Michigan or the USA, please contact Rev. Bill Amundsen at (517) 323-2445. Please leave a message if no one answers. He will return your call to arrange a mutually convenient time. We are a temperance organization concerned with under-age and abusive drinking. We work with the State Legislature to encourage a better social policy on beverage alcohol.

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showed no health benefit when the moderate group was compared to the control group. The upshot is that the media- and liquor industry-hype regarding moderate drinking is only HYPE. It is not real.

Because of the media's eagerness to report a benefit on a topic as controversial as B/A, and because the liquor industry nets a more profitable bottom line by pushing the story, the word has spread fast and furiously. One could only hope that the story cautioning us about those false results would also be proliferated. This article is an attempt to do just that. The researcher who found the flaws in the study concluded, "There's a general idea out there that alcohol is good for us, because that's what (was) reported. But there are many reasons to be skeptical."¹ He has proven that idea to be false.

1. <http://www.medicaldaily.com/alcohol-consumption-health-benefits-moderate-drinking-flawed-science-379001>

Other Internet references you may peruse.

- [http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/308200.php?](http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/308200.php)
- <http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/arh24-1/05-11.pdf>
- <http://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-03-moderate-good.html>

A Donation to MICAP Would be Wonderful

MICAP is a small non-profit organization with a mission to provide information about the consequences of alcohol abuse, and to promote public policies that address these issues. It is a big task, and we are committed to doing our part.

For this work, MICAP depends 100% on gifts from people like you. Our work year-around depends direct-

ly on these gifts. MICAP could not do its work without your financial support, which truly makes a difference in this important work.

MICAP is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Your gift to MICAP is tax deductible to the extent allowed by the tax code. Please use the enclosed envelope, or send your check to: MICAP, P.O. Box 10212, Lansing, MI 48901. From the bottom of our heart, we thank you.