

Other Drugs (ESPAD) has revealed a wide range of behaviors among European adolescents and young adults in terms of age at onset of drinking, prevalence of abstinence, drinking to intoxication, and frequency and amount of drinking. As Dr. Salme K. Ahlström and Ms. Esa L. Österberg report, differences in social norms, the context of drinking occasions, and alcohol pricing policies contribute to the observed variations in drinking patterns. Particularly for the age group of young adults, however, substantial gaps remain in the understanding of drinking behavior. (pp. 258–268)

COMMUNITY PREVENTION OF YOUNG ADULT DRINKING AND ASSOCIATED PROBLEMS

Whether they are working, attending college, or in the military, young adults are typically part of a community. In this article, Dr. Harold D. Holder examines three research-based community prevention programs that use a combination of environmental strategies to reduce heavy drinking and related problems. Trials of programs provide strong evidence that comprehensive strategies can effect substantial changes in alcohol-related behavior. Research indicates that local policies to reduce young adult drinking or alcohol-related problems are most likely to be effective when they are adequately enforced and when the intended targets of the intervention are aware of both the policies and their enforcement. By restructuring the total alcohol environment in a way that can be self-sustaining, these approaches are likely to be more effective than one-time interventions. (pp. 245–249)

PREVENTING ALCOHOL-RELATED PROBLEMS ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES

News headlines of alcohol-related injuries and deaths among college students highlight the need for effective

prevention measures on college campuses. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism Task Force on College Drinking addressed this problem. The Task Force reviewed existing interventions, most of which target individual drinkers rather than the college population as a whole, and issued recommendations on which interventions might be effective in a college setting. Dr. Robert Saltz summarizes these recommendations, which classify potential interventions into four tiers. Of these, only Tier 1 strategies (e.g., cognitive-behavioral skills training, motivational enhancement interventions, or interventions to challenge alcohol expectancies) have been demonstrated effective among college students. Tier 2 strategies, which include enforcement of laws to prevent alcohol-impaired driving, restrictions on alcohol retail outlet density, and responsible beverage service policies, have been successful with other populations and show promise for the college environment. (pp. 249–251)

ALCOHOL USE AND PREVENTING ALCOHOL-RELATED PROBLEMS AMONG YOUNG ADULTS IN THE MILITARY

Heavy alcohol use remains a persistent problem in the U.S. military and is especially prevalent among young adult (18- to 25-year-old) service members. According to Drs. Genevieve Ames and Carol Cunradi, certain characteristics of the military culture may contribute to heavy drinking in this population. The authors compare the rates of alcohol use among young adults in all four branches of the military with rates for young adult civilians, including college students. In addition to describing the relevant risk factors, such as a workplace culture in which alcohol is accepted as a way to deal with stress, boredom, and loneliness, the article also examines strategies that may help mitigate risk and reduce heavy

drinking in this group. Research is needed to evaluate these strategies, which included alcohol use policies, making alcohol use less glamorous, and promoting overall good health. (pp. 252–257)

ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION AMONG YOUNG ADULTS AGES 18–24 IN THE UNITED STATES: RESULTS FROM THE 2001–2002 NESARC SURVEY

The high prevalence of drinking in young adults is a serious public health concern. Alcohol use among young adults often is associated with a wide variety of risky behaviors and negative consequences, many of which are immediate and tragic. The 2001–2002 National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions (NESARC) presents a unique opportunity to examine young adult drinking for three reasons—the excellent response rate, the oversampling of young adults ages 18–24, and the inclusion of college-related group housing. Mr. Chiung M. Chen and Drs. Mary C. Dufour and Hsiao-ye Yi provide a broad overview of the nature of young adult drinking in the United States using data from the NESARC survey. According to these data, in 2001–2002, over three-quarters of young adults ages 21–24 were current drinkers, as were nearly two-thirds of those ages 18–20, despite the fact that the legal drinking age is 21. More than half of young adult men exceeded the recommended daily drinking limit, as did two-fifths of the young adult women. Drinking that exceeds this daily limit is likely to impair both mental and physical performance. Over the past decade there has been an increase in the number of young people drinking 5 or more drinks on at least 12 occasions during the past year—which helps to explain the increased risk of injury and other acute negative consequences so common today among college students ages 18–24. (pp. 269–280)