



Pediatric Academic Societies Meeting

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Alcohol Marketing in Popular Movies Doubles in Past Two Decades

Highest increase in alcohol brand placements found in movies rated for children, according to new research being presented at the 2017 Pediatric Academic Societies Meeting

SAN FRANCISCO – Alcohol brand placements in popular movies of all ratings nearly doubled during the past two decades, new research shows, but particularly in child-rated movies. Researchers presenting these findings at the 2017 Pediatric Academic Societies Meeting in San Francisco found the alcohol brands on the movie set are often those young people report drinking the most.

“Children and young people look to movie stars as role models.” said James D. Sargent, MD, FAAP, a professor in the departments of Pediatrics and Community & Family Medicine at the Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth and an author of the study. “For alcohol companies, when a favorite star uses a certain brand of alcohol, that brand gets linked to all the characteristics young admirers see in their movie idol. That’s why it’s no surprise that the brands commonly shown in movies are the most highly advertised brands, and the same brands underage drinkers tend to drink,” he said.

The abstract, “Trends in alcohol brand placements in top U.S. Movies, 1996-2015,” will be presented on Tuesday, May 9, at the Moscone Center West convention center.

Looking at the top 100 movies with the highest U.S. box-office gross revenues each year during the two-decade study period, the researchers determined that alcohol brand placement increased annually by an average of 5 percent each year, and 92 percent overall. Other findings:

- Alcohol use was portrayed in 87 percent (1,741) of all movies, overall. Specific brands of alcohol appeared in 44 percent (867) of them.

- Characters were shown drinking alcohol in 85 percent (1,108) of all top movies rated for children during the study period.
- Alcohol brands appeared in 41 percent (533) of child-rated movies during the study period.
- Just three brands of alcohol (Budweiser, Miller and Heineken) accounted for nearly one-third (33 percent) of all brand placements, with Budweiser appearing in the highest amount of child-rated movies (15 percent).

“Alcohol continues to be the drug of choice among young people,” says co-author Samantha Cukier, PhD, MBA, one that is responsible for 4,300 deaths in the U.S. each year among people under the age of 21. “This research suggests exposure to alcohol marketing increases in movies each year, which is concerning because movie alcohol exposure has been repeatedly shown to predict future alcohol use and higher rates of problem drinking,” she said.

Dr. Cukier said the findings also have policy implications.

“The high frequency of brand placements in movies aimed at children and young adolescents raises questions about the adequacy of alcohol marketing self-regulation,” she said. “I don’t think they are doing enough to avoid the underage segment in their movie alcohol placements.”

Dr. Cukier will present the abstract, “Trends in alcohol brand placements in top U.S. Movies, 1996-2015,” during a poster session from 7 to 10 a.m. in the convention center’s Poster & Exhibit Hall.

Please note: only the abstract is being presented at the meeting. In some cases, the researcher may have more data available to share with media, or may be preparing a longer article for submission to a journal. Contact the researcher for more information.

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The Pediatric Academic Societies (PAS) Meeting brings together thousands of individuals united by a common mission: to improve child health and wellbeing worldwide. This international gathering includes pediatric researchers, leaders in academic pediatrics, experts in child health, and practitioners. The PAS Meeting is produced through a partnership of four organizations leading the advancement of pediatric research and child advocacy: Academic Pediatric Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Pediatric Society, and Society for Pediatric Research. For more information, visit the PAS Meeting online at www.pas-meeting.org, follow us on Twitter @PASMmeeting and #pasm17, or like us on Facebook.

ABSTRACT

TITLE: Trends in alcohol brand placements in top U.S. Movies, 1996-2015

Background: Exposure to alcohol marketing during adolescence is associated with earlier onset of alcohol use and problem drinking. Alcohol companies pay for brand placements in entertainment, but little is known about the prevalence of this practice or time trends, given that youth increasingly watch movies using digital media.

Objective: To examine trends in movie alcohol content (alcohol brand placements and duration of alcohol use portrayals).

Design/Methods: Two independent content-coders examined the 100 movies with the highest US box-office gross revenues in each year between 1996 and 2015 (N = 1998 movies). Outcomes included the number of alcohol brand placements by scene and the duration of alcohol use (in hours) in each movie.

Results: Across the 20-year study period, alcohol use was portrayed in 87% (N = 1741) and alcohol brands appeared in 44% (N = 867) of movies. Alcohol brands were present in movies of all ratings (G: 7%; PG: 24%; PG-13: 50%; R: 49%), as were portrayals of alcohol use (G: 46%; PG: 72%; PG-13: 92%; R: 93%). Over the 20-year study period, there was a significant increase in the total number of brand placements (average increase of 4.6 [95% CI 1.7, 7.5; p = .004] placements per year) and 1.2 [95% CIs 0.21, 2.20; p = .021] unique brands per year. Change in the number of hours of alcohol use portrayed in movies over the study period was positive but not significant (B = 0.03, 95% CIs [-0.04, 0.100], p = .36). Budweiser was by far the brand with the highest prevalence, followed by Miller and Heineken; these three made up 33% of all brands placed in movies.

Conclusion(s): In the period we studied, alcohol brand placements in movies increased by 92%. A large share of brand placements are for heavily marketed brands that young people report drinking most. The high frequency of brand placements in movies aimed at children and young adolescents raises questions about the adequacy of alcohol marketing self-regulation.