



MICAP RECAP

Volume 113, Number 3 - June 2018

A Publication of the Michigan Council on Alcohol Problems,
an entity of the American Alcohol and Drug Information Foundation.

*Michigan Council on Alcohol Problems
Celebrating its 113th Anniversary in 2018*

AADIF/MICAP

(517) 999-0013
info@micap.org

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BIASED! The National Institute of Health's NIAAA division requested monies from the Liquor industry to fund a study which results would indicate that drinking booze is healthy.

Public Citizen Urges HHS to Investigate NIH Officials

(The following article was first printed in the Newsletter of "Public Citizen." It is re-printed here with their permission.)

In the wake of reports that the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), a division of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), asked the liquor industry to help fund a study about the health effects of alcohol use, *Public Citizen* is calling for an investigation and the firing of the head of the NIAAA.

The suspect study made national headlines when *The New York Times* reported on March 17 that officials with the NIAAA "waged a concerted campaign to obtain funding from the alcohol industry" for the study and paid "for scientists to travel to meetings with [alcohol industry] executives, where they gave talks strongly suggesting that the study's results would endorse moderate drinking as healthy." *The Times* reported in July 2017 that five of the world's largest alcoholic beverage manufacturers had pledged at least \$68 million to fund the study, which the study's lead researcher at the time denied having solicited.

"The fact that NIH accepted tens of millions of dollars from the alcoholic beverage industry to fund the alcohol study was bad enough," said Dr. Michael Carome, director of *Public Citizen's* Health Research Group. "But the revelations that senior NIH officials orchestrated an aggressive campaign to solicit such industry funding in violation of longstanding NIH policy, if confirmed, clearly undermines public trust in the integrity of the study and is a stain on the NIH's reputation."

Public Citizen Urges HHS to Investigate NIH Officials

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In a March 19 letter, *Public Citizen* urged the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Inspector General to immediately launch a formal investigation into the NIH campaign. On March 20, NIH Director Francis Collins announced he would launch its own internal investigation into the matter, but in light of all the revelations, *Public Citizen* has continued to push for a thorough and unbiased investigation that would be free of conflicts of interest.

In early April, *Public Citizen* also called for the resignation of NIAAA Director Dr. George Koob. According to STAT, soon after he became the NIAAA director in 2014, Koob assured the senior vice president for science at the Distilled Spirits Council, the leading alcohol industry lobby group, that under his watch, the NIAAA no longer would fund research evaluating the effects of alcoholic beverage advertisements, research that the alcohol industry disdains. Moreover, at the same time he was providing these assurances, his institute was seeking \$70 million from the alcohol industry to pay for the NIAAA study on moderate alcohol consumption.

In an April 11 letter, *Public Citizen* and 13 other consumer advocacy, science and public health groups urged HHS Secretary Alex Azar to request that the HHS Inspector General launch an investigation into the conduct of NIH officials who allegedly were involved in soliciting donations from alcoholic beverage companies.

The NIH Policy Manual explicitly “prohibits employees, either directly or through another party, from requesting or suggesting donations to the NIH or to any of its components, of funds or other resources intended to support activities,” the coalition letter noted. “An independent investigation by the HHS Inspector General is necessary to ensure public confidence in the integrity of the investigation and that all culpable NIH officials are held accountable.”

On, April 30, the HHS Office of Inspector General wrote in a letter to *Public Citizen* that it is reviewing the issues and concerns raised by *Public Citizen*. “Based upon the results of the review, we will take action as deemed appropriate,” the letter said.

The above article is confirmation of a previous MICAP-RECAP article.

In a related article some months ago (August 2016), *MICAP-RECAP* reported on research from the University of Victoria’s Center for Addiction Research in Canada that there were errors in the studies which indicated that drinking a glass of wine a day (especially red wine) was healthy for individuals. In that study, 74 of 87 studies which suggested a glass of wine a day was healthy, the researchers erred by including former alcoholics in the control group. The 13 groups which had more carefully set up their control groups found NO ADVANTAGE to having a glass of wine a day.

[Rev. W. J. (Bill) Amundsen, Treasurer, The AADIF/MICAP Board of Directors]

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASDs): What you Need to Know

Jacob Haffey, Intern, Michigan Developmental Disabilities Institute

March 26th, 2018

People are unknowingly struggling with and contributing to what are known as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASDs). “FASD” is an umbrella term that comprises fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS), alcohol related neurodevelopmental disorders (ARND), and alcohol related birth defects (ARBD). Research estimates 2 out of every 1,000 Americans have FAS and 15 out of every 1,000 have an FASD. Recent studies illustrate that 5% to 10% of elementary school children have been prenatally exposed to alcohol and have an FASD. Up to 70% of children who are in foster care have an FASD.

FASDs are caused by women drinking alcohol while they are pregnant. The developing fetus is exposed to alcohol before birth, and then after birth the individual experiences the impact of having an FASD. The effects range from mild to severe and affect a person’s ability to regulate their emotions, learn effectively, and to interact socially through the lifespan.

Fifty-five percent of women in the United States between the ages of 18 and 44 report any drinking. Eighteen-and-a-half percent of women in this age bracket report binge drinking. Among women in the United States who are pregnant, 10% of them report any drinking and 1/3 of the women from that group report binge drinking.

In Michigan, half of all pregnancies are not planned. In 2015, 61.7% of women in the state of Michigan drank alcohol in the three months before conception. Approximately 6,700 women (6.2%) consumed alcohol in the last three months of pregnancy.

FASDs are completely preventable if women abstain from alcohol during pregnancy.

There should be warning signs meant to inform customers of the risks of prenatal alcohol exposure for developing infants. Alcohol Warning Signs legislation (AWS) in other states have been shown to decrease alcohol consumption during pregnancy by as much as 11%. Data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) illustrates a 35% decrease in the odds of any drinking and a 75% decrease in the odds of binge drinking among pregnant women after these laws were passed. The Michigan Coalition for Fetal Alcohol Resources Education and Support (MCFARES) is advocating passage of these laws in order to decrease the frequency of FASDs in Michigan.

For more information about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders, please contact Charisse Cossu-Kowalski of MCFARES at charisse@mcfares.org or 586-329-6722 or Ann Carrellas at the Michigan Developmental Disabilities Institute at ann.carrellas@wayne.edu or 313-577-8562.



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Michigan Council on Alcohol Problems
American Alcohol and Drug Information Foundation
Mailing address: P.O. Box 10212, Lansing, MI 48901

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

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