Substance Use Behaviors Among College Students

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Significance of Problem
- A serious public health concern among college students is misuse of alcohol.
- Drinking on college campuses is a unique culture and changing this culture is a top priority. (Task Force of the National Advisory Council on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism [NAAAC], 2002)
- Binge drinking, a growing problem, has been correlated with high-risk behaviors, such as unsafe sex, sexual assault, injuries, and even death. (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism [NIAAA], 2013)
- Students tend to overestimate the amount of alcohol their peers consume, which leads to the problem of normalizing dangerous drinking behaviors. (Dunbar, McKinley, & Book, 2008)
- College students tend to underestimate the amount of alcohol they themselves consume, which leads to the problem of normalizing dangerous drinking behaviors. (Dunbar, McKinley, & Book, 2008)

Purpose
The main objectives of this study were to:
- Evaluate evidence about drinking behaviors among college students,
- Assess substance use behaviors among undergraduate students at Valparaiso University, and
- Identify factors that are associated with drinking on the college campus.

Summary of Evidence
- Upon entering college, students should be screened for alcohol use. (Scott-Shelton et al., 2014)
- Reductions in drinking are associated with web-based interventions with personalized, normative feedback. (Dunbar, McKinley, & Book, 2008; Scott-Shelton et al., 2014)
- Young drinkers respond better to electronic feedback than in-person feedback. (Dunbar, McKinley, & Book, 2008)
- Interventions should target high-risk events such as freshmen year, spring break, and 21st birthday. (Scott-Shelton et al., 2014; Tanner-Smith & Lipsey, 2015)
- Interventions are more successful when based on theoretical models such as Theory of Planned Behavior Change, Social Ecological Framework, and Motivational Interviewing.

Methods
Approval: Valparaiso University IRB
Setting: Valparaiso University
Sample: Undergraduate students, Fall 2014
N = 3,052
Design: Cross-sectional
Survey: Emailed via SurveyMonkey® Modified version of the Core Alcohol and Drug Survey: Long Form
Analysis: Data analyzed using descriptive statistics

Sample Characteristics (n = 1,095)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greek-affiliation</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student athlete</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drink alcohol</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where students drink</td>
<td>Where you live = 72%, Off-campus housing= 61%, Fraternity/sorority = 47%, On-campus events = 20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

High-Risk Behaviors/Consequences of Drinking

Key Findings
- Drinking
  - 84% of Greek-affiliated students drink compared to 57.3% of non-Greek (X² = 66.001, p < .001)
  - 83.5% in fraternities drink compared to 55.6% not in fraternities (X² = 28.521, p < .001)
  - 84.3% in sororities drink compared to 58.5% not in sororities (X² = 37.306, p < .001)
  - 75% of athletes drink compared to 63% of non-athletes (X² = 6.582, p = .001)
- Binge drinking
  - 71.7% of drinkers engaged in binge drinking during the past 30 days
  - 76.5% of males binge drink compared to 58.4% of females (X² = 50.800, p = .001)
  - 75.3% of Greek-affiliated students engaged in binge drinking compared to 60.3% of non-Greek
  - 71.6% of athletes engage in binge drinking compared to 64.4% of non-athletes (X² = 20.281, p = .625)
- Top 3 reasons for drinking
  - 86.5% “to have fun”
  - 75.2% “to feel good and relax”
  - 46.8% “makes it easier to socialize”

Conclusions
- Majority of students on this campus drink alcohol
- Students mostly drink where they live, in off-campus housing, and in bars and restaurants
- Percentage of males and females who drink is the same at Valpo; however more Greek-affiliated students engage in drinking versus non-Greek students for both males and females
- Athletes drink significantly more than non-athletes
- Binge drinking is a significant problem, particularly among males and those associated with Greek life

Recommendations
- Develop evidence-based interventions to support a change in the drinking culture on this campus
- Target binge drinking, Greek-affiliation, spring break and Halloween as high-risk situations
- Collaborate with Office of Alcohol and Drug Education to build on current strategies