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*An informative, provocative and essential newsletter:*



# The Health Reformer

***Many incoming students have visions of "Animal House" in their heads when they think of college***

..."Animal House," set at fictitious Faber College, has been credited with reviving fraternity culture after Greek membership had waned during the Vietnam War years. Glorifying dangerous drinking, DUI, and vandalism, the movie reinforces the mistaken idea that students who drink heavily are just being "normal" college students. Many incoming students have visions of "Animal House" in their heads when they think of college, idealizing the parties and believing that high-risk drinking should be a part of the overall college experience. Some students have even been known to choose college campuses based on their reputation for partying. The harmful consequences of this "culture of drinking" manifest themselves in tragic ways that the movie fails to depict.

In April 2002, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism's (NIAAA) landmark report, *A Call to Action: Changing the Culture of Drinking at U.S. Campuses*, outlined the problem of high-risk drinking on U.S. college and university campuses. The report notes that each year over 1,400 college students die from alcohol-related unintentional injuries. In addition, alcohol is involved in 500,000 unintentional injuries, 600,000 assaults, and 70,000 cases of sexual assault and acquaintance rape.

Although these numbers are disturbing, the belief among students that high-risk drinking is a "rite of passage" remains supported by long-held customs and traditions, alcohol industry promotions and marketing, and lax policies and enforcement of laws.

*by William DeJong, PhD and Josephine Crisostomo, MPH  
U.S. Department of Education's Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention (August 26, 2003)*

Note: When it comes to underage drinking, is it solely a parental or family responsibility or do you and the community at large have a role?

"Holding young people solely responsible for underage drinking is like holding fish responsible for dying in a polluted stream. Young people cannot swim away from the alcohol messages that pollute our environment. Use your influence to help clean it up one piece at a time." (1998 FACE—Truth and Clarity on Alcohol)

It's a community's responsibility to uphold healthy laws and norms that support young people maturing into adulthood unscathed by alcohol poisoning, blackouts, unwanted sexual advances or rape and

near-miss, injury and fatal intoxicated driver crashes. *JENNIFER ROBIN, StatesmanJournal.com  
May 29, 2003*

***Heart disease can be reversed/cured***

The idea took on a life of its own when a young cardiologist, Dr. Dean Ornish, published a report in the *Lancet* medical journal, in 1990, that shook up the medical community. Dr. Ornish spent one year studying 50 men with advanced heart disease, many of whom were candidates for coronary bypass surgery.

He randomly assigned the men to two groups. Both groups were asked to quit smoking and to walk daily. In addition, the first group practiced stress management and followed a strict vegetarian diet with less than 10 percent of calories as fat and with virtually no cholesterol.

The second group was given the standard American Heart Association's "Prudent Diet" for heart disease. This diet allowed 30 percent of calories as fat and up to 300 milligrams of cholesterol a day. At the end of the year, when the results were presented at the Scientific Session of the American Heart Association in Washington, D.C., they became front-page news all over America. Dr. Ornish reported that those on the very-low-fat vegetarian diet not only dropped their dangerous LDL-cholesterol levels by 37 percent, but 82 percent of their narrowed, plaque-filled arteries had actually widened, allowing more blood and oxygen to the heart muscle. The heart disease had, in fact, begun to reverse itself. And the older men with the most advanced disease actually had the best results.

The group on the so-called Prudent Diet, however, had virtually no cholesterol drop, and most of their coronary arteries showed increased narrowing. In general, their heart disease had actually gotten worse.

It appears that their Prudent Diet, designed for the prevention and treatment of heart disease, does not do its job. At the press conference Dr. Ornish concluded:

"The moderate diet recommendations of the American Heart Association do not go far enough to effectively influence the progression of coronary heart disease. People with clinically demonstrated disease need to go beyond the present dietary recommendation."

We have known for years that much of today's

(over, please)

coronary heart disease could be prevented. But it's exciting to realize that, under the proper conditions, it is now also possible to reverse it. This revolutionary study suggests that, given the proper diet, we may be able to eat ourselves out of heart disease.

*Health Power, Health by Choice Not Chance*

### ***Helping our children to help themselves is better than to leave them a large amount at death***

If parents, while they live, would assist their children to help themselves, it would be better than to leave them a large amount at death. Children who are left to rely principally upon their own exertions make better men and women, and are better fitted for practical life than those children who have depended upon their father's estate. The children left to depend upon their own resources generally prize their abilities, improve their privileges, and cultivate and direct their faculties to accomplish a purpose in life. They frequently develop characters of industry, frugality, and moral worth...Those children for whom parents do the most, frequently feel under the least obligation toward them.

...(Parents) leave their property to their children, and nine times out of ten it is even a greater curse to their heirs than it has been to themselves. Children, relying upon the property of their parents, often fail to make a success of this life...The very best legacy which parents can leave their children is a knowledge of useful labor and the example of a life characterized by disinterested benevolence. By such a life they show the true value of money, that it is only to be appreciated for the good that it will accomplish in relieving their own wants and the necessities of others.... 3 T pp. 122, 123, 399

### ***Hypertension medications do not cure hypertension; they only control it***

The past few years have produced an avalanche of new drugs that are effective in lowering blood pressure. Some are lifesaving. Most produce prompt results--the quick fix that Americans love.

But a closer look at hypertension medications reveals some disquieting facts: the drugs do not cure hypertension; they only control it. In some cases the medications need to be taken for life. Unpleasant side effects may include fatigue, depression, and lack of sexual desire and impotence. While the drugs help protect against strokes, they do not protect against coronary atherosclerosis (the plugging of heart arteries). They may actually *promote* atherosclerosis, diabetes, and gouty arthritis.

#### **What are the alternatives?**

A number of major scientific studies have shown that simple dietary and lifestyle changes can reverse most essential hypertension in a matter of weeks without drugs.

- A large percentage of people are sensitive to salt and would benefit from its reduction in their diets.
- When the weight goes down, blood pressure levels usually fall. Reducing excess weight is often the only treatment needed to correct a rising blood pressure.
- A diet very low in fat yet high in fiber lowers the blood pressure about 10 percent even without weight loss or salt restriction. Thinning of the blood, which results from eating less fat, probably produces these favorable changes.
- Deleting alcohol from the diet will lower blood pressure and do the body a favor in several other areas as well.
- Physical exercise lowers blood pressure by reducing peripheral arterial resistance. In addition, regular exercise promotes general health and well-being.

Note: People taking blood pressure medications should not play doctor and change doses or stop medicines on their own. But those who are willing to make healthful lifestyle changes will usually find the physicians glad to help them eat and exercise their way out of hypertension.

*Health Power, Health by Choice Not Chance*

### ***Big Alcohol: Worse than Big Tobacco***

...my status as a concerned citizen compels me to make the following general observations based on my experience as a grand juror:

#### **Big Tobacco: Today's Dragon**

Currently, there is -- in my opinion -- an admirable campaign against Big Tobacco: those arrogant corporations who peddle in poison, addict children, lie about scientific research, and abdicate their civic responsibilities for poisoning a population. Because of the economic burden faced by the states to care for populations that are poisoned by tobacco, nicotine, and second-hand smoke, we are now seeing a sea change in public reaction to corporate responsibility for smoking and its health-related hazards.

Again, I applaud and support these admirable battles against Big Tobacco, an industry that has for too long, too contemptuously, and too egregiously reaped Big Profits at the expense of public health.

#### **Big Alcohol: Tomorrow's Challenge**

But here's the rub. After my experience on the grand jury and hearing in detail the criminal consequences of lives gone out of control while lubricated with alcohol, I have to wonder if as a society we're not targeting the lesser of two evils. While the fight against Big Tobacco is necessary to "increase the peace," it is not sufficient until we also turn our sites onto Big Alcohol.

Yes, as unhealthy as tobacco is -- and even given the number of crimes, both civic and moral, the tobacco companies have committed in promoting smoking -- abuse of tobacco is not an underlying foundation to crime and criminal activity the way alcohol and drugs are. Yes, as nasty and unhealthy as smoking is, it is not normally the case that a troubled soul smokes a pack of cigarettes and then, agitated by nicotine, goes on a crime rampage. More likely, our felon-in-waiting Frankie downs a six-pack, tosses back a fifth of J.D., smokes crack, or shoots up heroin and then goes about perpetrating his anti-social, criminal activities.

...So, sure, let's fight Big Tobacco -- tooth and nail, stained fingertips and yellowed teeth -- and let's break up their evil empire and return some sanctity to the notion of public health

But let's not stop there. No. Let's use our fight against Big Tobacco as merely a warm-up, as a massive public practice of strategies and morale-building on our way to vanquishing our real opponent, the real elephant in the courtroom: Big Alcohol.

...If we truly want to stop crime and increase the peace and safety in our homes and our streets, we will re-think our attitudes toward alcohol and drugs -- but especially alcohol, which is a legally-sanctioned and culturally-accepted drug.

*by Penny Perkins, ABOUT.COM - Alternative Media*

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