Alcohol and Cancer:  
A Statement of the American Society of Clinical Oncology  

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As required by the Alcohol Policy 18 Conference, I/we have signed a disclosure statement and note the following conflict(s) of interest:

No conflicts to disclose.
American Society of Clinical Oncology - Overview

- Founded in 1964, ASCO is the world's leading professional organization for physicians and oncology professionals caring for people with cancer.

- ASCO represents nearly 45,000 physicians and other healthcare professionals specializing in cancer treatment, diagnosis, and prevention.

  - ASCO is unique in that we are the only organization that encompasses all oncology subspecialties, allowing our members to grow from the professional and personal expertise of their colleagues worldwide and across disciplines. International members make up approximately one-third of the Society’s total membership and represent more than 150 countries.

- **Our Mission:** Conquering cancer through research, education, and promotion of the highest quality patient care.

- **Our Vision:** A world where cancer is prevented or cured, and every survivor is healthy.
ASCO’s Cancer Prevention Committee

Goals:
- Advance the education of the oncology community in the area of cancer prevention
- Advocate public policy to assure patients the benefits of ongoing cancer prevention research
- Promote clinical, behavioral, and translational research in cancer prevention and control
Alcohol and Cancer

- Alcohol use has been shown to cause at least 7 different cancers:
  - Mouth & Throat
  - Larynx
  - Esophagus
  - Breast
  - Liver
  - Colorectal
How many people are we talking about?

- Estimated 18,200-21,300 alcohol attributable cancer deaths in the United States in 2009
  - Based off BRFSS and National Alcohol Survey (NAS)
- 3.2-3.7% of all cancer deaths
- By amount of consumption
  - >40 g/day (3+ drinks) = 48-60% of deaths
  - 20-40 g/day (1 ½ - 3 drinks) = 14-17% of deaths
  - <20g/day (less than 1 ½ drinks) = 25-33% of deaths (larger “n”)

Alcohol and cancer statement

- E-published on November 7, 2017 in Journal of Clinical Oncology (publication date January 1, 2018)
- Written by experts in:
  - Medical Oncology
  - Cancer Disparities
  - Epidemiology
  - Public Health
  - Cancer Prevention
- Authors: N. LoConte, A. Brewster, J. Kaur, J. Merrill, A. Alberg
Goals of the statement

- Promoting public education
- Detailing policy efforts to reduce the risk of cancer through evidence-based strategies that prevent excessive use of alcohol
- Providing education to oncology providers about the influence of excessive alcohol use and cancer risks and treatment complications, including clarification of conflicting evidence
- Identifying areas of needed research
Major sections

- Review of alcohol use/abuse statistics and drinking guidelines.
- Overview of evidence linking alcohol to cancer risk and outcomes, including disparities in use and related cancers.
- Barriers to addressing alcohol and cancer in oncology settings.
- Highlights areas of greatest research need.
- Recommends public health strategies (primarily policy) for reducing excessive drinking.
  - Also includes policy recommendations of major international and U.S. cancer and public health organizations.
Barriers to addressing alcohol and cancer in oncology settings

- Conflicting data on “heart health” of moderate drinking
- Low physician knowledge
- Alcohol use among physicians
Research needs

- Effect of alcohol cessation on cancer risk and treatment
- Effect of alcohol use on cancer treatment delivery
  - Effect of EtOH on post-op morbidity
  - Effect of EtOH on chemotherapy, hormonal therapy and supportive medication metabolism
- Systems based research into identification of patients with alcohol use issues
- Appropriate clinical interventions for alcohol use reduction
ASCO recommended policy strategies to reduce high-risk drinking

- Alcohol screening and brief intervention in clinical settings
- Regulating alcohol outlet density
- Increasing alcohol taxes and prices
- Maintaining limits on days and hours of sale
- Enhancing enforcement of laws prohibiting sales to minors (<21)
- Restricting youth exposure to alcohol advertising
- Resisting further privatization of retail alcohol sales
- Including alcohol in Comprehensive Cancer Control plans
- Supporting efforts to eliminate “pinkwashing”
Pink-washing

“Pink-washing” = Using the color pink or the pink ribbon to market products associated with breast cancer.
Media Coverage

- 554 online publications (audience 38,149,491)
- 58 print publications (audience 172,310,478)
  - Highlights: Time, Vogue
- 419 TV stories on 314 networks (audience 172,268,739)
- Most read article in last year on JCO website
Thank you!

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