Why We are Here:

The Case for Alcohol Policy

Timothy Naimi M.D., M.P.H
Boston Medical Center
Boston University School of Public Health
As required by the Alcohol Policy 17 Conference, I have signed a disclosure statement and note the following conflict(s) of interest:

No conflicts to disclose.
Measuring Public Health Importance

- Size of problem
  - health effects
  - social effects
  - economic effects
- Preventable Fraction
  - How much can be done
- “Second-hand” effects
  - What happens to ‘others’
## Public Health Importance, Substance Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substance</th>
<th>Public Health Impact</th>
<th>Preventable Fraction</th>
<th>Second-Hand Effects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>++++</td>
<td>++++</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marijuana</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>++?</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opioids</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>+++</td>
<td>++++</td>
<td>+++</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Alcohol Policies: the Cornerstone

- Affect multiple types of problems

- Need not rely on persuasion, will power, health consciousness, civic responsibility

- Can change public opinion/norms

- Can be cost-efficient, cost saving
Challenges for Alcohol Policy

- Research can be complex, “messy”
- Funding for research is limited
- Public health infrastructure is weak
- Advocacy orgs few, funding constrained
- Political, industry opposition is fierce
- Result: gaps in knowledge, larger gaps in policy implementation

Figure 1 Mean policy implementation score by policy grouping, US states 1999–2011

Challenges, cont.

• Federal tax cuts (16%), on top of erosion
• State deregulation initiatives masquerading as “modernization” – more outlets, more hours, threats to 3-tier
• Cont’d illegal alcohol sales, poor enforcement resources for existing laws
• More marketing …
Opportunity Abounds

• To create a safer environment, better health, greater wellbeing:
  – Research
  – Public health practice
  – Advocacy, community organizing, coalition building
In Support of Alcohol Policies

• Effective, population-level impact
• Strong evidence base
• Fair: cost/inconvenience mostly borne by excessive drinkers
• Promote personal choice by making sale of a dangerous product acceptable
• Promote liberty by making public places more inviting, roadways safer
Conclusions

• Alcohol consumption and related harms of great public health importance
• Alcohol policies critical to addressing, preventing problems
• There are many challenges …
• Resulting in opportunities …
• That’s why we’re here
Looking Ahead...To AP 18

- Cancer – more to come...
- Second hand effects: National Academies report impaired driving, 0.05% BAC, FASD
- Over-service and illegal sales at Whiteclay, NE
- Minimum pricing
- Industry investments in research, policy evaluation
- New tools to assess impacts – InterMAHP
Looking Ahead, cont.

- Hot button topics: taxes, marketing, outlet density
- Health disparities and alcohol
- Public health law and policy making –
- Opinions and attitudes about drinking
- International perspectives, experiences
- Community organizing, generating social movements

- POSTER SESSIONS Thursday, Friday 7:30 a.m.
“Law and education are the twin pillars of the social order. In respect to most human problems, the hope of the future lies in laws soundly conceived and well-administered.”
Thanks, Welcome to AP 18!