Smart Drinking Goals:
Doing Good or Doing Well?

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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:
Aims

• Review recent initiatives by the alcohol industry associated with alcohol policy and alcohol research
• Put these initiatives in the context of past activities
AB InBev Foundation Launched to Reduce Harmful Drinking Worldwide

FUNDED BY AN INITIAL COMMITMENT FROM AB INBEV OF 150 MILLION USD OVER 10 YEARS

The AB InBev Foundation is a non-profit organization that has been created to reduce harmful drinking globally by identifying effective, science-based programs and policies for public-private partnerships to advance positive social and behavior change.
Aims of AB InBev Foundation

• 1) support transparent and verifiable monitoring and evaluation of AB InBev’s Global Smart Drinking Goals,
• 2) guide nine community pilots with evidence-based interventions and technical advice,
• 3) support the training of healthcare providers,
• 4) advance alcohol health literacy - knowledge of strategies to avoid harmful drinking - as a strategy to reduce harmful drinking.
The Foundation’s work

- Establishing local committees in pilot cities (Leuven, Belgium; Brasília, Brazil; Jiangshan, China; Zacatecas, Mexico, and Columbus, Ohio, USA) to create stronger collaboration among government, NGOs, healthcare, local research institutions, and AB InBev to develop joint approaches to local challenges.
- Providing support for the implementation of science-based programs and technical expertise through a Technical Advisory Group (TAG), which consists of experts in alcohol science, health communication, and measurement and evaluation.
- Developing a verifiable monitoring and evaluation framework to track the impact of AB InBev’s Global Smart Drinking Goals commitment.
- Supporting screening and Brief Intervention/Advice training for primary care physicians and other health care practitioners in the community pilots.
Smart Drinking Goals

• Social marketing campaigns ($1 billion invested until 2025) to influence social norms and behaviors.
• Guidance labels – end of 2010
• No/Lo Alcohol Products – 25% of global volume
AB InBev's Global City Pilots
Goal: 10% reduction in harmful use of alcohol

• Currently this work is ongoing in five pilot cities: Leuven, Belgium; Brasília, Brazil; Jiangshan, China; Zacatecas, Mexico, and Columbus, Ohio, USA.
• Toolkit being developed “by leading researchers” to add to specific initiatives ongoing in these cities (e.g., Yao Ming visits elementary schools in China; safe rides in Columbus))
• Focus on underage drinkers and adults
• Sequential, cross-sectional population surveys in the intervention and control cities; baseline surveys conducted by Gallup
• Limitations: research design, sampling, intervention, confounders, COIs, etc.
Chronology leading up to Smart Drinking

Goals: Producers commitments

- October 9, 2012, eleven major global producers of alcoholic beverages and two major trade associations issued a set of “Producers’ Commitments” to reduce harmful drinking.
- Industry-sponsored database created by the International Center for Alcohol Policies (ICAP) (now called the International Alliance for Responsible Drinking [IARD]).
- The database was an inventory of over 3,500 “industry actions” conducted in support of the World Health Organization’s (WHO) Global Strategy to Reduce the Harmful Use of Alcohol (Global Strategy) (WHO, 2010).
SHARE YOUR INITIATIVES
Organizations are invited to report their initiatives to IARD for inclusion on this site. REPORT NOW >>

WHERE IS INDUSTRY ACTION TAKING PLACE?

Industry members have a long history of involvement in a broad range of efforts to prevent harmful drinking in countries around the world. Individual companies, trade associations, social aspects organizations – alone or in partnership with other stakeholders – have worked to reduce alcohol abuse in support of the Global Strategy. Additional new efforts include increasing actions in low- and middle-income countries involving collaborations of international producers and national stakeholders.
‘Free Cider to Promote Responsible Drinking’

- The Aston Manor Brewery handed out free 330ml bottles of hard cider (x% alcohol) to students starting university as part of a £50,000 advertising campaign to promote responsible drinking.

‘Have fun, be careful’

- 16 and 17 year olds received a campaign pack, which included a condom, a bus pass holder and mobile phone credit. They also received a text message on New Years Eve, reminding them to Have fun and Be careful.

http://initiatives.producerscommitments.org/
Statement of Concern

• In February, 2013 a group of health professionals, policy researchers and NGO representatives drafted a “Statement of Concern” about the Global Producers’ involvement in public health policies designed to tackle alcohol harm.

• In less than one month, more than 500 public health professionals, health scientists and NGO representatives from over 60 countries endorsed the Statement.

• Both the Statement and the endorsements were sent to WHO Director General Dr Margaret Chan to express global concerns about the conflict of interest between multinational alcohol companies and the public health community.
Independent Analysis of Industry Actions

• Public health professionals (N=19) representing five geographic regions rated a sample (N = 1046) of the actions using a content rating procedure that measured estimated population reach, risk of harm, advertising potential, policy impact potential, and other aspects of the activity.

• The industry actions were conducted disproportionately in regions with high income countries (Europe and North America).

• The benefits accruing to the industry (“doing well”) included brand marketing and the use of CSR to manage risk and achieve strategic goals.

• Only 27% conformed to the target areas recommended by the World Health Organization as strategies to reduce the harmful use of alcohol.

• The overwhelming majority (96.8%) of industry actions lacked scientific support and a small percentage (11.0%) had the potential for doing harm.

• Conclusion: Alcohol industry CSR activities are unlikely to reduce harmful alcohol use but they do provide commercial strategic advantage while at the same time appearing to have a public health purpose.
WSJ report: “With Moderate Drinking Under Fire, Alcohol Companies Go on Offensive…”

- Public-health officials “want to tell you that alcohol causes cancer,” Sarah Longwell, managing director of the American Beverage Institute, told the crowd. The industry, she said, was in danger of losing its “health halo.”
- “We can't let them gain traction.” said Beer Institute President Jim McGreevy, addressing executives at an April conference about the alcohol critics.
- Anheuser-Busch InBev NV now also includes in its corporate risk statement that the WHO seeks to reduce what it calls the harmful use of alcohol by 10%.

AB InBev Corporate Risk Statement (2016)

• “Negative publicity regarding beer, other alcoholic beverage or soft drink consumption, publication of studies that indicate a significant health risk from consumption of beer, other alcoholic beverages or soft drinks, or changes in consumer perceptions in relation to beer, other alcoholic beverages or soft drinks generally could adversely affect the sale and consumption of our products and could harm our business, results of operations, cash flows or financial condition as consumers and customers change their purchasing patterns.”

Source: www.sec.gov
Conclusions

– Industry CSR Activities directed at alcohol problems have major limitations from a public health perspective
  – Rarely evidence-based
  – Unlikely to reduce harmful alcohol use
  – Self-serving (i.e., promoting self-regulation)
  – Extension of their marketing practices
  – Some may pose a risk to public health
  – Evaluation research is minimal or impossible
  – May be compromising the work of public health experts, the WHO, its regional offices, and the NGOs
From Beer Street to Priority Lane

Martin Rowson, The Guardian, 14 February 2012