

Parents may be putting their children on a path to drinking

- **Parents are the largest supplier of alcohol to under 18s**
- **Teens three times more likely to drink full serves if parents supply**

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Teenagers whose parents supply alcohol in early adolescence are three times as likely to be drinking full serves of alcohol at age 16 as children in families that do not supply alcohol, a major new study from the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre at UNSW Australia has found.

In the largest study of its kind, researchers followed nearly two thousand parent/child pairs over four years in a bid to provide guidance to parents on how best to moderate their child's drinking.

Chief investigator of the study, Professor Richard Mattick, said there was a deal of confusion among parents as to how best to moderate their child's drinking and thereby hopefully minimise risks such as injury, violence, poisoning, risky sexual practices and future alcohol problems.

At age 12 and 13 years, close to one in six children in the study reported being given alcohol by their parents. By 15 and 16 years of age more than a third of the sample was being supplied alcohol by their parents. Of these, 15 per cent were drinking full serves compared with only 1.5 per cent of the younger children.

"What we found was that early parental supply of alcohol through school years 7 to 9 was the single biggest predictor of drinking in year 10," said Professor Mattick. "It was more influential than family circumstances and issues; more influential than individual psychological risk factors and more influential than peers."

By age 15/16 years, half of all children in the study were drinking alcohol and obtaining it from a variety of sources including parents, peers, older teens and other adults. Children who were given alcohol by their parents were also more likely to be obtaining alcohol from these "non-sanctioned" sources as those whose parents did not supply alcohol.

Professor Mattick said the results showed that contrary to opinion among many parents, supplying children with alcohol did not moderate their drinking.

"Parents are the major supplier of alcohol to the under 18s," said Professor Mattick. "Many of these do so with the best of intentions – to introduce alcohol in a safe, supervised environment with the aim of

moderating a child's drinking." There is also a great deal of interest in the so-called European model whereby parents allow children to sip alcohol from a relatively young age, he said.

"We know that adolescent drinking is associated with a wide range of later harms in early adulthood including injury, sexually-transmitted diseases, adult alcohol dependence, and changes in brain function have been reported by US researchers," said Professor Mattick.

Dr Monika Wadolowski, who has recently completed her PhD on aspects of the study, said that by supplying alcohol, parents may inadvertently sanction drinking.

"Most parents will do whatever they can to minimise these risks. Our study suggests that supplying alcohol is not the best strategy to achieve this outcome," Dr Wadolowski said.

"The results also indicate that those children who are given alcohol by their parents may be more likely to seek out alcohol from a variety of other sources."

Further analyses will be conducted to determine the extent to which parental supply moderates excessive risky drinking at age 16 and beyond, she said.

The marketing of alcohol, industry advertising, changes in palatability to sweeter more acceptable drinks, plus the density of liquor outlets all also contribute to adolescent drinking.

Results from the parental supply of alcohol study will be presented at the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre Annual Symposium in Sydney on Monday 8 September. Refer to page four of this release for key slides that will be presented at the symposium about this study.

- Ends -

The study was funded by grants from the Australian Research Council; Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE); Australian Rotary Health.

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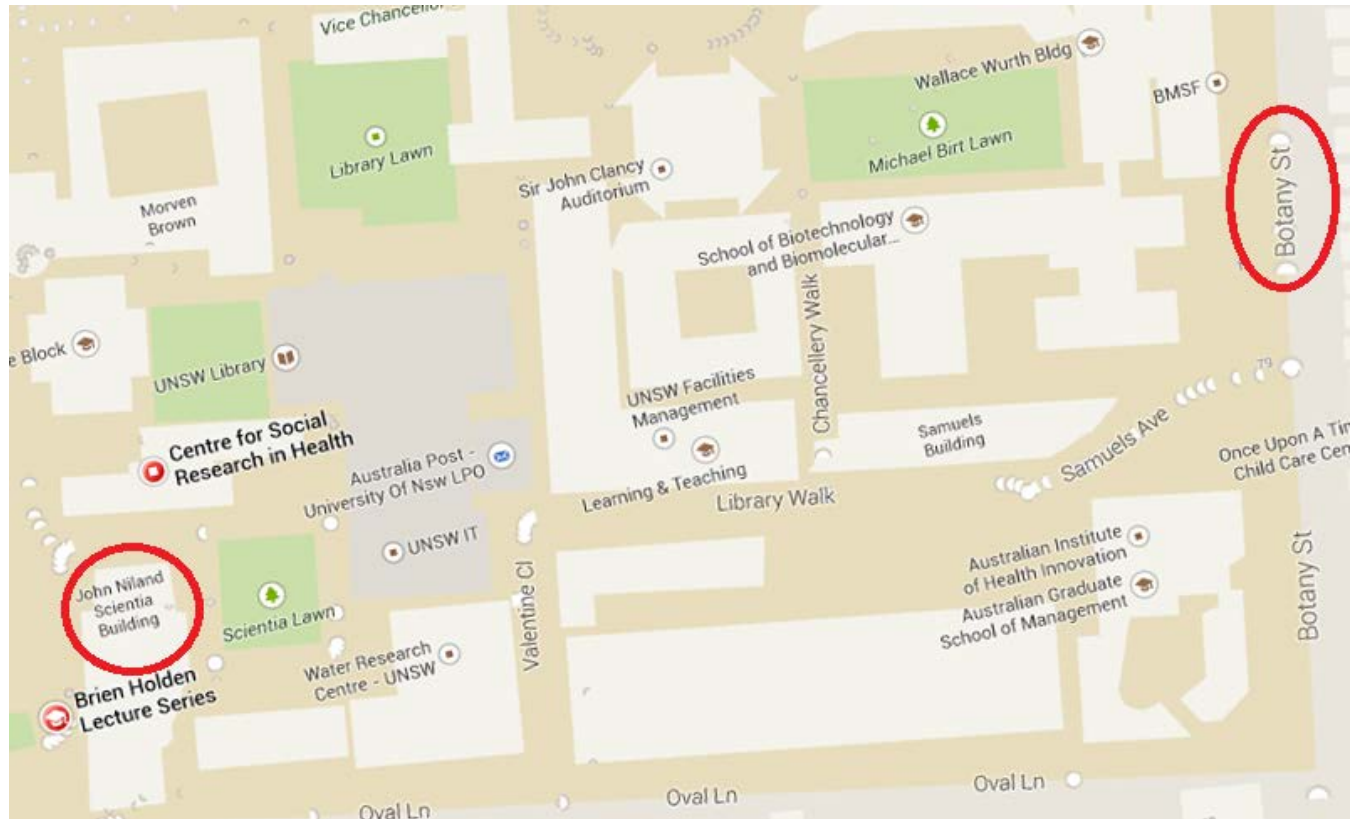
Media conference:

What: 2014 NDARC Annual Research Symposium media conference


When: 10am Monday 8 September 2014

Where: John Niland Scientia Centre, University of New South Wales, Kensington, Sydney. Enter the UNSW campus via Gate 11, Botany St, Kensington (map below).

Who: Professor Richard Mattick & Dr Monika Wadolowski



**Early parental supply of alcohol:
Association with drinking in mid-adolescence**
Richard P. Mattick



Medicine National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre

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Comparing parents in our sample to the National Drug Strategy Household Survey

| Parental frequency of drinking | NDSHS 2010 adults (40-49 years) | Current sample of parents at Wave 1/2010 |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| Daily | 7.5% | 2.7% |
| Weekly | 45.0% | 48.5% |
| Less than weekly | 33.3% | 39.2% |
| No alcohol in past 12 months | 7.4% | 9.6% |




How many adolescents have been supplied alcohol by their parents?

| School grade | No alcohol | Sips only | Full serves | Total |
|---------------------|------------|-----------|-------------|-------|
| Year 7 (12-13 yrs) | 83.8% | 14.8% | 1.5% | 16.3% |
| Year 8 (13-14 yrs) | 73.1% | 22.9% | 4.0% | 26.9% |
| Year 9 (14-15 yrs) | 71.3% | 21.5% | 7.2% | 28.7% |
| Year 10 (15-16 yrs) | 63.8% | 21.3% | 14.9% | 36.2% |




Factors not associated with mid-teen drinking

| | OR | 95% CI | | OR | 95% CI |
|-----------------------------------|----|--------|---------------------------------|----|--------|
| Demographics | | | Parent/family behaviours | | |
| Two-parent household | NS | | Household alcohol use | NS | |
| Parent is Australian born | NS | | Home access to alcohol | NS | |
| Low SEIFA score | NS | | Parental consistency | NS | |
| Parent education | NS | | Alcohol-specific rules | NS | |
| Child has disposable income | NS | | Parental monitoring | NS | |
| Child has older siblings | NS | | Familial heavy alcohol use | NS | |
| Family is religious | NS | | Parental responsiveness | NS | |
| | | | Parental demandingness | NS | |
| | | | Alcohol communication | NS | |
| | | | Family conflict | NS | |
| | | | Family positive relationships | NS | |
| Adolescent peer influences | | | Adolescent behaviours | | |
| Peers disapprove substance use | NS | | Internalising behaviour | NS | |
| | | | Prior alcohol use | NS | |



What factors predicted drinking?

| | OR | 95% CI | | OR | 95% CI |
|-----------------------------------|-------|-----------|---------------------------------|-------|-----------|
| Demographics | | | Parent/family behaviours | | |
| Child is female | 1.93* | 1.26-2.94 | Parental supply of alcohol | 2.68* | 2.09-3.44 |
| Child age | 1.69* | 1.14-2.50 | | | |
| Adolescent peer influences | | | Adolescent behaviours | | |
| Peer substance use | 1.11* | 1.07-1.14 | Rule-breaking/aggression | 1.04* | 1.02-1.06 |
| Alcohol norms | 1.03* | 1.01-1.04 | Social problems | 0.95* | 0.90-0.99 |



Interpretation

- Of the almost thirty different predictors, seven are the significant predictors of mid-teen drinking. Mid-teen drinkers are more likely to:
 - have parents who supply alcohol (the strongest single predictor)
 - be female,
 - be older,
 - see alcohol use as normative,
 - be a rule-breaker/aggressive,
 - have peers who use substances, but particularly
- Parental supply in early teens has the strongest association with mid-teen consumption of whole beverages – mid-teens are almost three times (likelihood = 2.68 times) more likely to drink whole beverages if their parents have been supplying alcohol in the early teen years
- Additionally, teens who have been supplied alcohol by parents have markedly increased acquisition of alcohol from other sources. They are 15 times more likely to acquire alcohol from other sources – than if their parents had never supplied them with alcohol – including sources such as other relatives (adult or siblings), peers, or self-supply

