

## Driving under the influence of alcohol:

### FINDINGS FROM A STUDY OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS



Mrs. Laura Foster, Research Assistant, NCSA

As part of a specialization programme sponsored by the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) in Toronto, Canada, NCSA's Research Assistant, Mrs. Laura Foster, conducted a study entitled "Risk Perception and Driving under the Influence (DUI) of Alcohol and Marijuana among University Students in Barbados". This article will present select findings pertaining to DUI of alcohol.

A non-probability sample of 371 students from the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, participated in the survey which was carried out between the months of September and December, 2016. Participants were selected using a two-stage sampling technique: a non-random selection of classes/courses was taken and students from within selected classes were recruited based on their attendance in class on the day of questionnaire distribution. Only persons within the target age range (18 to 29 years) were considered for inclusion.

The majority of respondents were female (73.6%) and between the ages of 18 and 21 years (60.6%). Approximately eight out of every 10 students admitted to consuming alcohol in the year leading up to the survey. Of those who had done so, 17.2% were classified as "problematic drinkers" by the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT).

When asked about DUI behaviours, just under



two-thirds (62.6%) of participants stated that they had ridden in a car operated by someone under the influence of alcohol during the preceding year.

Similarly, approximately half (49.1%) of those who both drive and consume alcohol (N=82) reported that they themselves had driven after using alcohol during the same period.

These findings highlight the fact that students of the UWI Cave Hill Campus engage in DUI behaviours, both as drivers and passengers. Perception of potential harm or risk is known to be a determinant of behaviour. Therefore, in an attempt to better understand DUI among this group, participants were also asked to answer questions which sought to gauge the level of risk or harm associated with DUI. Interestingly, 90% of participants believed

it likely that a driver would be involved in an accident if they operated a vehicle while under the influence of alcohol. This is notably higher than the percentage of participants who thought it likely that a person driving under the influence of alcohol would be detected by police (49.5%) and/or sanctioned for doing so (62.2%). The obvious difference between the perceived risk of harm and the perceived risk of detection and sanction may be a reflection of the antiquated DUI laws which Barbados has in place. More specifically, persons are aware that the laws are outdated and that the breathalyzer is not used to detect DUI alcohol; however, they cannot deny that DUI alcohol leads to impaired driving as well as road traffic accidents and fatalities.

In light of this study's findings, it is recommended

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## Foreword



*Dr. Ronald Chase -  
Registrar Psychiatric Hospital*

*M*erry Christmas! I hope you have a holiday that fills your heart with joy!

As the season approaches, plans of home renovations or new house furnishings are the topics of conversation. The food lists are circulated at work as the office Christmas party is being organized. The memories of past Christmas ham, jug-jug and great cake tease our senses in anticipation of this year's Christmas Day lunch. The only negative of this season is the

comprehensive house cleaning that most males and teenagers try to avoid. The traditional Bajan Christmas is centered on food and beverages, all successful Christmas events have an abundance and variety of both.

In our merriment we need to stay mindful of the amount of alcoholic beverages we consume during our celebrations. In Barbados and probably in the wider Caribbean, "being drunk" is characterized by "falling into a ditch or passing out". We seem not to recognize "feeling a little lightheaded" or "just a little sweet" as alcohol intoxication. The dis-inhibition from drinking alcohol which gives men the courage to approach a female in a party for a dance or conversation could be a sign of intoxication. The ability to make persons laugh and be the life of the party after "a few" could be the consequence of being intoxicated. Are these people laughing with me or at me because I am drunk? In our disinhibited period, we may make an inappropriate remark to our bosses or co-worker during the merriment of the office Christmas party. Are these remarks taken at face value or attributed to you being drunk? Will your drunken remarks or behavior leave an immovable negative impression of you?

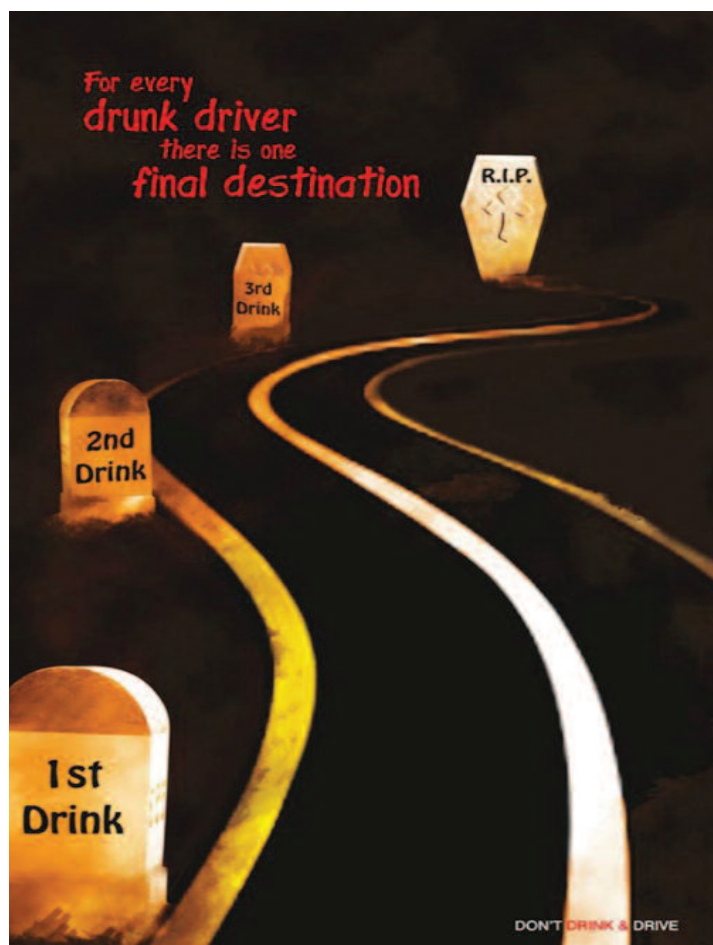
What impression are we giving our children? What are our children learning from this behavior? Most of a child's social learning is from adults with whom they come into contact. Our children will observe us "enjoying a beverage" at Christmas during the various family functions. It's the time to be jolly, friends and family come to the house and enjoy food and beverages together. The atmosphere awakes as the adults become disinhibited from the alcoholic beverages they have consumed but all is viewed as "good fun". Do our children learn that "good fun" only happens with alcohol? Do our children learn from these experiences that a celebration of any event is associated with alcohol?

In Barbados, most of us have heard the expression "the car knows its way home". Many stories have been told in a jovial manner of experiences of drinking "real nuff drinks" and waking up in your car parked outside your house without a memory of driving the car home. This is the cavalier attitude of our society toward "drinking and driving". It is viewed as "being able to hold your drinks" and a characteristic of manhood. The dangers of

driving under the influence of alcohol are minimalized. A group of friends attend a party and everyone in the group drinks alcoholic beverages together, without recognizing the potential danger of the driver falling asleep at the wheel or a slowed reaction time causing their vehicle to be involved in a fatal accident on the way home. They may walk away from the accident or they may not.

Most persons are aware that drug overdoses can kill, but in Barbados we view drugs as cocaine, heroin and to a lesser extent marijuana. However, alcohol is a drug and an overdose is life threatening which is called Alcohol Toxicity. Alcohol binge drinkers are at great risk of getting Alcohol Toxicity. Binge drinking is the practice of consuming large quantities of alcohol in a single session, usually defined as five or more drinks at one time for a man, or four or more drinks at one time for a woman. The Christmas season is a special time of year and the occasion will invite some persons to over indulge in alcoholic beverages. Binge drinking can result in car accidents, emergency room visits or hospital admissions.

Let us be wise this holiday season. Let us drink alcoholic beverages in moderation and don't drink and drive. Let us avoid car accidents and trips to the emergency room. Let us set good examples for our children and the youth of Barbados. Let us have a joyful and Merry Christmas holiday.



## Driving under the influence of alcohol: *continued*

that additional research be conducted on the topic using a representative sample. The present study's reliance on a non-probability sample prevents the generalization of the findings to the wider UWI Cave Hill student body. Therefore, efforts must be made to determine if the findings hold true for this population. Additionally, future studies should also investigate the factors which perpetuate or contribute to DUI. Such information will offer a richer understanding of the DUI phenomenon and allow for better response planning.

Despite the recommendation for further research, this study confirms the existence of DUI alcohol among students enrolled at the UWI Cave Hill Campus. Given the association between DUI alcohol and road traffic accidents/fatalities, efforts should be made to reduce or eliminate its occurrence.

To this end, it is recommended that the local DUI legislation be updated and that the long-awaited legislation regarding the use of the breathalyzer be enacted. Consideration should also be given to implementing sobriety check-points in the vicinity of the University campus and other places (nightclubs, bars, etc.) known to be frequented by UWI students and persons in the target age group.

In addition, it is also suggested that approaches similar to the "Sober Zones" which were piloted during the 2016 Crop Over Season be implemented on a wider scale/ongoing basis. Initiatives such as these offer party-goers the opportunity to sober up before going on the road or arrange alternative transportation (e.g. taxis) should it be needed.

Lastly, educational programmes and advertising campaigns which focus on the dangers associated with DUI alcohol may prove beneficial. Such efforts should be intensified during periods associated with increased alcohol consumption, for example, the upcoming holiday season and Crop Over.

*"Parents are the ultimate role models for children. Every word, movement and action has an effect. No other person or outside force has a greater influence on a child than the parent."*

*- Bob Keeshan*

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR DRUG AWARENESS MONTH 2018

### January 5, 2018

Staff Empowerment – "Eating right when the money tight –  
Healthy eating on a budget"

Venue: National Council on Substance Abuse

### January 10, 2018

Lunch time Lecture –

Managing Stress at 12:00 p.m. – **All are invited**

Venue - National Council on Substance Abuse

### January 14, 2018

Church Service – **All are invited**

Venue: Black Rock Wesleyan Holiness Church  
at 9:00 a.m.

### January 17, 2018

Substance Abuse Foundation/National Council on Substance  
Abuse/Royal Barbados Police Force Workshop –  
"Prosecuting the Addiction"

Venue: National Council on Substance Abuse

**Closed Activity**

### January 23, 2018

Lunch time Lecture – Drugs & Seniors  
at 12:00 p.m. – **All are invited**

Venue: Chelsea Road Church of God

### January 24 – January 27, 2018

Blue Week – NCSA staff will be at the following locations  
collecting donations for Evergreen House a subsidiary  
of Street Gospel Ministries.

- Sky Mall – January 24, 2018
- Massy Sunset Crest – January 25, 2018
- Cave Shepherd – January 27, 2018

### January 26, 2018

Staff Fun Day

**Closed Activity**

### January 30, 2018

Community Give-Back –

Breakfast at Erdiston Nursery and Special Unit



## Partnership Key to the Success of Project SOFT



### NCSA Says Thank You!!!

This year a number of new partners joined the Project SOFT family. Over the years, the contribution of each partner has been critical to the success of the programme. We salute you, our partners, for your donations over the 15 years of Project SOFT. Wishing you a Merry Christmas and looking forward to working with you in 2018. The Board, Management and Staff at NCSA are therefore grateful for our longstanding partners:

- Ban-N-Dale Luggage, Cave Shepherd
- BICO Ltd
- Brydens Express
- Caribbean Development Bank
- Chefette Restaurants
- CIBC Offshore Banking Services
- City of Bridgetown Co-operative Credit Union Ltd
- Duty Free Caribbean Cave Shepherd
- Knights Ltd
- NASSCO
- National Sports Council
- Pan Atlantic Bank & Trust
- Rose & Laflamme Barbados Ltd
- Royal Barbados Police Force
- S Y Adam & Son
- Sewing World Department Store
- Sports and Games
- The Dining Club
- West India Biscuit Company Ltd.
- Price Waterhouse Coopers
- Banks Holdings Group of Companies
- Pizza Man Doc
- Massy Stores Barbados Ltd.

### We welcome our new partners:

- Armstrong Agencies
- Armstrong Health Care
- Arthur Moore Pest Control
- Barbados Tourism Marketing Inc. (BTMI)
- Dwise Inc.
- General Distributors Inc.
- Grantley Adams International Airport Inc.
- Insurance Corporation of Barbados Ltd.
- Ministry of Tourism
- R L Seale & Co. Ltd
- Stansfeld Scott & Co. Ltd.
- The Sandy Lane Charitable Trust Inc.



*Project Soft camp leaders left to right: Uncle Ryan, Aunty Alicia, Camp Nurse Aunty Margaret, Aunty Cheryl and Uncle Rasheed.*



*Project Soft campers participating in an educational session.*



*"Blue Team" with leader Uncle Ryan.*





Portia Gaskin, Tour Guide at Grantley Adams International Airport Inc. receiving a thank- you package from Project Soft campers.



Campers tour the Grantley Adams International Airport Inc.



Sports day.



"Green Team" with their leader Uncle Mosiah.



Team leaders Uncle Ryan, Aunty Alicia, Aunty Cheryl and Uncle Mosiah.



Campers dramatise the effects of drugs.





# Christmas celebrations at the NCSA







## Project SOFT 2017 – Fun and Educational!

By Mrs. Makeada Bourne – Community Programme Officer, NCSA

**Project Safeguarding Our Future Today (Project SOFT)** was designed and implemented in 2002 in response to the increasing levels of crime and violence amongst our young people. Research findings revealed that a relationship exists between violence / crime and drugs. A direct link between drug use and the family has also been found. In some cases, the user was introduced to the drug by a family member, while in other instances the breakdown in family dynamics resulted in the person using drugs as a coping mechanism.

Research has shown that the key risk periods for drug abuse are during major transitions in children's lives. The first big transition for children is when they leave the security of the family and enter school. Later, when they advance from primary to secondary school, they often experience new academic and social situations, such as learning to get along with a wider group of peers. It is at this stage of early adolescence that children are likely to encounter drugs for the first time.

They may be exposed to greater availability of drugs (legal and illegal), drug abusers, and social activities involving drugs. These challenges may increase their risk of using alcohol, tobacco, and other substances. Project SOFT therefore seeks to increase the protective factors of 11year old students transitioning from primary to secondary school in order to prevent or delay the onset of drug use. Project SOFT is divided into three components to ensure that the goals and objects are met. These components are: Residential Camp, Prevention First Club – Children, Prevention First Club – Parents.

Project SOFT was held at the Marian Retreat House from 27th August to 2nd September, 2017. The theme for the camp was 'Know the Facts... Make the Choice.' The NCSA structured the camp to empower participants with the information, tools and skills needed to prevent the onset of drug use. Some of the topics covered during the camp were:



*Camp Leaders and campers participate in early morning exercise.*

drug use and abuse, self-esteem, stress management, decision making, anger management, adolescent development, peer communication, nutrition and health and conflict resolution to name a few. Other activities included a field trip to the Grantley Adams International Airport Inc. as well as creative sessions in drama, dancing, and singing.



*Campers participate in a drug educational session.*





In recognition of the 15th anniversary of the programme, the camp concluded with a church service

which was held in collaboration with Cox Road New Testament Church of God at MERC New Testament Church of God, River Road, St. Michael on Sunday, 24th September, 2017. Before an audience of past Project SOFT campers and parents, the 2017 campers displayed various art forms like drama and singing and received their graduation packages. The **top boy** was **Kaden Hoyte** and **top girl** was **Chelsie Simmons**.

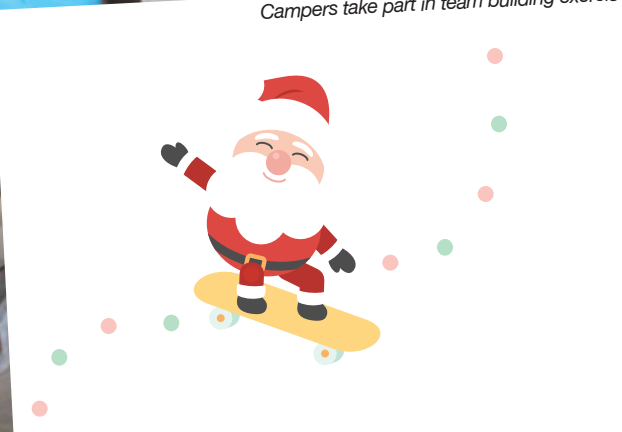
The Manager of NCSA thanked parents for entrusting the team with their children and encouraged them to continue to participate in the upcoming sessions. She also encouraged parents to be positive role models for their children.



*Campers take part in team building exercises.*



*Campers on tour at the Grantley Adams International Airport Inc.*



**HAPPY NEW YEAR!!**

*Brian "Bumba" Payne facilitating a session on the impact of drug use.*

