Comparison of Alcohol Education and Awareness Amongst Graduate Students in the Health Professions vs Graduate Students in Non-Health Related Programs at GVSU

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**Purpose:** Alcohol consumption among college age students continues to be problematic: 1,825 college students between the ages of 18 and 24 died from alcohol-related unintentional injuries and thirty one percent of college students met criteria for a diagnosis of alcohol abuse in 2005. Intervention strategies and education programs do exist on some college campuses, but few have been evaluated for their effectiveness. Studies have shown that many factors affect the drinking habits of college students. In this study we compared alcohol education and intake awareness between students in health professions graduate programs and students in non-health related graduate programs at Grand Valley State University to determine if there is a difference in drinking behavior based on the field of study.

**Materials and Methods:** All graduate students at Grand Valley State University aged 21 and older and enrolled in the fall semester of 2012 were eligible to participate in this study. An 11 question Survey Monkey survey was e-mailed in September 2012 to all eligible participants by the Office of Institutional Analysis at GVSU. The nature of the questions in the survey related to amount and frequency of alcohol consumption, current area of study, and educational background. Results of the survey were returned in an anonymous fashion, and then analyzed using SPSS.

**Results:** Seven hundred eighty-nine surveys were received, 209 from health professions graduate students and 580 from non-health professions graduate students. Five hundred forty-three of the respondents were female, 241 were male and 5 students did not report gender. An individual with a health/biological/psychological/behavioral sciences background was 9.90 times more likely to be in a health professions graduate program than an individual with a background in business/math/statistics and 14.66 times more likely than an individual with an art and humanities/education/speech therapy background. Health professions students were 1.60 or 1.92 times more likely to strongly agree or agree, respectively, rather than disagree with the statement that “my educational background influences the quantity I drink” (p=0.011). An individual who strongly agreed with the statement ‘my educational background influences how often I drink’ was 2.61 times more likely to be from a health professions program than an individual who strongly disagreed (p=0.022). No statistically significant relationship was observed between number of drinks per night and educational background.

**Conclusion:** The data suggested that health profession~~s~~ students believe that their educational background influences both frequency and quantity of alcohol intake. Health professions graduate students drink alcohol less frequently than non-health professions students, but the number of drinks consumed per outing was not statistically different between the two groups.

These data suggest that health profession students have overall reduced alcohol consumption as compared to non-health profession students. Further studies are needed to determine what influences health profession students to drink alcohol less frequently.