

Research says alcohol is the worst drug

A British research team has quantified what should have been obvious by now: The most dangerous drug, the most costly to society from abuse, is the one that's legal nearly everywhere and can be bought at the corner store.

Not heroin. Not crack cocaine. Not methamphetamine. But booze, good ol' alcohol.

In a study published online Monday, the team of experts evaluated how addictive each drug is and how it harms the human body, plus the environmental damage it causes, the cost to society and the harm it does to families.

And alcohol won, hands down.

It might not be as addictive as heroin or as bad for you as crack, but alcohol is everywhere, easy to buy and cheap, and nearly impossible to eradicate. Its damage to families is legend; its cost to society enormous.

The research team admitted that it's alcohol's widespread use that makes it the worst of the nasty three, all considered quite deadly.

"When drunk in excess," one report said, "alcohol damages nearly all organ systems. It is also connected to higher death rates and is involved in a greater percentage of crime than most other drugs, including heroin."

So what do we do now? Return to prohibition?

The experts say no.

"Alcohol is too embedded in our culture and it won't go away," one said. He advised targeting problem drinkers, much as successful drunk-driving programs have done.

And the lower-ranking drugs, including marijuana and LSD?

One of the report's authors was fired from a British government job after he criticized an increase in penalties for marijuana violators, but opposition to legalization seems to be fading, at least in the U.S.

Already, many states have legalized "medicinal" use of pot, which harkens back to the widespread use of "medicinal" alcohol during our failed fling with prohibition. A headache or a bad cough seems to qualify most users.

True, federal law has not changed, but it is not being enforced and seems to be unlikely to hold back the tides of change for long.

Then maybe society, here and abroad, can focus on the real issues: people with a drug problem of any kind. Maybe we can find a way to save at least some of them, to help them help themselves and put some pressure on those who won't.

The sooner society recognizes the truth and changes the law and government policy to address the real issues, the sooner we can do something about rampant drug abuse. This is an issue whose time has come.

-Steve Haynes



So much to do and so little time

Tick, tock, tick, tock. The climate clock is ticking and our window of opportunity to get the house next door painted is slowly closing. We've been blessed with unbelievably good weather since our return from Mexico and should have finished the painting project last week. But, as usual, our plans don't always work out. First, the color of the paint didn't suit us. I know we approved the mix at the store but, once on the house it changed. Too bright of a blue. Jim brought home a quart of charcoal and a shade of green he thought it needed and mixed it all up. It's not perfect, but it's a shade we can both live with. Too bad the front side was done before we decided it was too bright. Oh, well. The third coat went on really fast.

It seemed every time we would try to get out the door, paintbrush in hand, something would stop us. Next thing 'ya know, the sun had gone down and another day had passed with no progress.

The good news is -- when we actually get to work, we work very fast.

The front and south sides are done (except for the trim) ...leaving the north and back sides. Nobody sees the back but, I'm sure our northern neighbors would appreciate a better view.

-ob-

A good friend received the diagnosis

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



of cancer. In the matter of days she went from being a happy-go-lucky homemaker and wife to patient. It was a Monday when she had a routine check-up. The next day her doctor's office called to say she needed follow-up tests and five days later she underwent surgery. She's home now, with an excellent prognosis. But, thank God for that check-up.

When I told her how long it had been since my last physical, she "jumped my case". "Okay, okay," I said. "In honor of you, I'll make an appointment before the week is out."

Now, to you women "out there" who have always put yourself last -- stop! If it's a matter of money, call your doctor's office first and set up a payment plan. If you're worried the doctor will be upset with you because of your weight; remember, "better fat than a fatality." If I can do it you can too.

-ob-

Egg production at the Plotts farmstead has come to a screeching halt. I threatened the old girls with the "noodle bath" if out-put (eggs) didn't equal in-put (feed). Luckily for the hens, Jim intervened on their behalf. He said, "Don't be too hard on them. See all these feathers? They're molting. The reason they're not laying is all their energy is going into putting on new feathers before winter." Okay, so they caught a break on that one. I'll give them time to fluff their feather coat but, after that, I better see some results.

-ob-

Speaking of noodles, I'm ready to try my hand at some homemade noodles. Perhaps I inherited my Grandma Davison's talent for making what my mother called "hame strap" noodles. You know, the big, thick, chewy ones. I've passed off the store-bought frozen kind as my own for years. It's time to "fess up" and give it a shot.

Of course, Grandma never had a recipe: an egg, some salt, flour and half an egg-shell of cream or milk. Mix it up, roll it out, cut to length, dry and voila! Noodles. Sounds simple.

That's what they said about sending a man to the moon, too.



Thumbs up to the Bluejay varsity football team! Thanks for a great season. Emailed in.

Thumbs up to the Bluejay Football coaches, Lucas Melvin, Todd Fulton, Tony Fiscus, David Stover, & Jeremy Hawks! Thank you once again for a wonderful football season. The time and dedication that you devote to our boys is immeasurable. You are special people that play a very important role in the lives of these young men, teaching them how to play and win like champions and how to handle defeat with dignity and pride. As parents we couldn't ask for anything more! Thank You and always PROUD TO BE A BLUEJAY! Emailed in.

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THE NORTON TELEGRAM

ISSN 1063-701X

215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, KS 67654

Published each Tuesday and Friday by Haynes Publishing Co., 215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, Kan. 67654. Periodicals mail postage paid at Norton, Kan. 67654.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Norton Telegram, 215 S. Kansas, Norton, Kan. 67654

Official newspaper of Norton and Norton County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, and the Nebraska Press Association

Nor'West Newspapers
Dick and Mary Beth Boyd
Publishers, 1970-2002



Modern technology is becoming a hazard on the road

Self absorbed. It's all about me. I am the center of the universe.

All of these words come to mind when I see today's endless stream of motorists talking, tweeting, twittering and Face booking while speeding down the boulevard. This recent phenomenon has become epidemic and it's spreading.

Harsh words?

Certainly, but there are also harsh consequences in lives lost, bodies maimed or injured permanently in traffic accidents caused by those who place their own need to continually use their cell phone before focusing on the task at hand -- driving safely and consciously.

In 2008, the National Highway Traffic Safety Association estimated 11-percent of drivers on the road were using some type of phone. I live and drive to work and school everyday in Manhattan, Kan. and from the number of phone users I see each day, I'd bet 40-percent are distracted while driving by a phone of some sort in one of their mitts. The other holds a mascara brush, a hamburger, a liter of water or an electronic reading device (Kindle, Nook, etc.) while they steer with their knees.

Recent research at Virginia Tech revealed an almost three-fold increase in the odds of crashing or nearly crashing when dialing a hand-held phone while driving.

Insight

John Schlageck

Risk associated with text messaging may be much higher based on a new study of truck drivers. The main finding here was a 23-fold increase in the odds of crashing, nearly crashing or drifting from a travel lane among truckers who texted while driving.

Whatever happened to conscientious and courteous driver of yesteryear?

How many motorists today continually scan the road and sidewalks in front of them for kids biking or walking down the sidewalk? How about a watchful eye for the elderly couple out on an early morning stroll? Or someone else walking his or her dog?

Such conduct while driving today has become the exception rather than the rule. Did I mention before that driving today is all about me getting where I need to go?

What about laws against such driving habits? Would they help?

The specter of Big Brother riding on your shoulder or the threat of a policeman or highway patrolman pulling you over and writing a ticket isn't much of a deterrent.

Creating more laws banning cell phone use while driving will not ensure people put them away. The problem is enforcement.

This would mean law enforcement types would have to ticket such offenders -- and we'd need more of them to do so. We'd also need more streets because the ones we have would be impassable because of all the parked offenders and enforcement vehicles.

There's never a phone in my car. Don't need one. Don't want one. My car functions the way it was intended to without one. Anyway I need to be ever vigilant looking out for all those motorists who are doing everything else in their cars but driving.

What we need on our streets and highways today are motorists who understand when you crawl behind the wheel, your undivided attention is required.

This means no phone calls, no meals and no makeup.

Just drive.

John Schlageck is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. Born and raised on a diversified farm in northwestern Kansas, his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.

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