



Coalition of Alcohol and Drug Educators

Dalgarno
INSTITUTE

Political Briefing

Media Briefing

Community Briefing

Media & Community Briefing:

World Cancer Day 2021: Alcohol Causes Cancer!

*Alcohol Consumption A
Leading Risk Factor For
Cancer. But Awareness and
Policy Response Remain
Inadequate*



Alcohol Consumption A Leading Risk Factor For Cancer. But Awareness and Policy Response Remain Inadequate

World Cancer Day - 4th February

On World Cancer Day, countries, the World Health Organization and civil society – including the Dalgarno Institute – are joining forces to raise awareness of the global cancer burden and take further steps to better prevent and reduce cancer.

The need to step up cancer prevention and control not only globally, but even more so in Australia is immense. For instance, the WHO warns that, if current trends continue, the world will see a 60% increase in cancer cases over the next two decades. The greatest increase (an estimated 81%) in new cases will occur in low- and middle-income countries, where survival rates are currently lowest.

After tobacco (18%), alcohol is the second biggest cause of cancer – long before other risk factors such as infections (3%), physical inactivity, or sunlight.

“The fact that alcohol is a carcinogen has been clearly confirmed,” says Shane Varcoe, Executive Director, Dalgarno Institute. “In fact, science knows since the 1980s that alcohol causes cancer. But we are concerned because public awareness and policy action has so far been inadequate in comparison to the growing threat”

Alcohol caused [10.3 million cancer disability-adjusted life years lost](#), representing 4.2% of all cancer disability-adjusted life years lost worldwide in 2016.

For breast cancer globally, alcohol is the single biggest risk factor. In total, alcohol-related cancer causes 650,000 deaths every year.

Recent data indicate that the proportion of cancers attributable to alcohol worldwide has [increased](#).

A large part of the alcohol-related cancer burden [originates from light to moderate alcohol consumption](#). Therefore, population-level preventive strategies are best suited to reduce the alcohol-attributable cancer burden. These are alcohol taxation, alcohol availability regulations and alcohol advertising bans.

“Alcohol-attributable cancer is largely preventable – through evidence-based, cost-effective, and high-impact alcohol policy solutions,” says Mr Varcoe.

“Evidence shows that informing people, [increasing awareness and understanding of alcohol’s cancer risks leads to bigger support for alcohol prevention and control](#) measures. This in turn leads to significant reductions in cancer mortality.

We calculated the [cancer deaths averted from improved alcohol policy](#) through a 10% and a 30% total per capita alcohol consumption reduction scenario.

“We call on our government to make cancer prevention a priority by implementing high-impact alcohol policy solutions, such as alcohol taxation.

“And we need a national conversation about the real effects of alcohol, such as cancer, to raise public awareness.”

Media Liaison – 1300 975 002 E: Research@dalgarnoinstitute.org.au

