

# **Social marketing: Evidence of (in)effectiveness and when it might be useful**

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# 'Social marketing'

- Mass media campaigns to educating individuals on drinking issues and choices (eg. responsible drinking, drink-driving, standard drinks, laws)
- 'Social marketing = social goals but commercial marketing techniques'
  - 1) identify determinants/barriers of behaviour/behaviour change
  - 2) test and develop to 'get the message right'
  - 3) decide how to deliver it
- To be effective, message needs to match readiness for change, eg. pregnant women

# The bad news

- In industrialised countries, alcohol education and mass media campaigns are rated as ‘ineffective’
  - Increase knowledge without changing behaviour
  - Small positive effects short lived

“Despite good intentions...an ineffective antidote for alcohol advertising”  
(Babor et al. 2003)
- “Little evidence of effectiveness or cost effectiveness”  
WHO (2002) Prevention strategies
- Little evidence that ‘social marketing’ techniques any better at changing drinking behaviour

# Limitations

- Difficulties measuring effectiveness
  - Availability of indicator data may be limited
  - Outcome data reflect *all* contributing factors, not just campaigns
- We expect fast effects from public money, but cultures changed by slow cumulative effects
- Individuals don't change if nothing around them changes

# Counter-balancing alcohol advertising

- Alcohol health promotion is always paddling against the stream
  - Large scale advertising and other marketing by alcohol industry
  - That builds on a well established culture of drinking
- 'Huge differences in resources and exposure between alcohol ads and health promotion ads
- Policy on alcohol advertising and other marketing is key to alcohol health promotion
- Precautionary Principle recommended (Babor et al. 2003)

# Responsible advertising?

- Industry self-regulation and voluntary advertising codes not satisfactory (Hill & Casswell 2001)
- Warning labels not considered effective (Babor 2003)
- In USA, alcohol company 'responsibility ads'
  - similar to product ads, send mixed message
  - placed so adults twice as likely to see them as teenagers
- Industry 'partnerships' with public health
  - helps them set limited agendas and constrain public health strategies (McCreanor, Hill & Casswell 2000)

# A multiple policy approach

- 'Social marketing' on its own not effective
- More effective as part of multi-strategy package
- Use media to support effective policies  
such as taxation, minimum age, drink-drive laws, enforcement
- Multiple policies - all pointing in the same direction  
(WHO Global Status Report: Alcohol Policy, 2004)

## Other ways of working with the media

- An important part of community action on alcohol
- Increase media coverage and public debate by
  - Initiating news items, photo opportunities, articles
  - Sharing/translating research or harm statistics
  - ‘Piggy-backing’ on national news items
- Can reframe alcohol issues from a public health perspective
- Can support implementation of effective policies

# Using the media strategically

- Identify clear strategic objective based on
  - Your organisation's whole programme
  - all factors contributing to drinking and harm
  - greatest leverage for change right now

Then decide,

- Who is the audience? Who can make that change?
- What's the message?
- What is the best medium? (DeJong 2002)

- Think creatively about 'the media' in Pacific communities