

# The Alcohol and Breast Cancer Connection

Exploring Messaging and Communication Channels that Resonate with Undergraduate Women



*Presented by*  
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# Background: Rationale

- **Low awareness** of dose-response causal association between alcohol and female breast cancer, despite convincing evidence
- **Undergraduate females 18-22 may be at increased risk due to:**
  - High exposure
  - Vulnerable stage of breast tissue development
- **Need to increase awareness:** the more alcohol a woman consumes over her lifetime, and perhaps most significantly at a younger age, the higher her risk for breast cancer

# Background: Objectives of the Study

- **Identify types of messaging** about the connection between alcohol and breast cancer risk that resonate with undergraduate females to influence awareness and intentions around alcohol consumption
- **Develop an implementation-ready message/ad** to be used in an awareness campaign
- **Identify best communication channels** to reach target audience with a campaign

# Methods

- **Qualitative focus group study** conducted in K-W area (summer/fall 2017); Four groups (n=31); 1.5 hour duration; \$20 gift cards; lunch or dinner provided
- **UW, Laurier U, and Conestoga College students recruited** (Eligibility: female, enrolled, 18-22 years, drink alcohol)
- **Three concept messages tested:** attention, comprehension, motivation, relevance, and appropriateness (close- and open-ended questions)

# Three Concept Awareness Ads

Every **drink** is a **choice**.



DID YOU KNOW?

Alcohol is a **carcinogen** that can cause **breast cancer**.

Less than one standard drink every day can increase **lifetime risk**.

One **standard drink** is less than you think.

**IF YOU CHOOSE TO DRINK, THINK NO MORE THAN ONE AND BE DONE.**

To learn what "a standard drink" is and how to reduce health risks visit, [www.rethinkyourdrinking.ca](http://www.rethinkyourdrinking.ca)

How much you **drink** now matters **later**.



DID YOU KNOW?

**Alcohol & breast cancer** - the more you drink, the greater your **lifetime risk**.

As little as three standard drinks per week has been shown to **increase the risk**.

Even if you stop drinking later, drinking patterns now raise your risk forever.

**EVERY DRINK, ANYTIME, COUNTS. USE THE FREE "SAYING WHEN" APP TO TRACK YOUR DRINKING AND REDUCE YOUR RISK.**

[www.sayingwhen.com](http://www.sayingwhen.com)

Cheers to **women** making good choices about **alcohol**.



DID YOU KNOW?

Drinking **alcohol** is a causal risk factor for **breast cancer**.

The more you drink over your lifetime the **greater your risk**.

It's not just heavy drinking — even less than one standard drink a day can **increase your risk**.

**SHARE WITH ALL THE WOMEN IN YOUR LIFE WHAT A STANDARD DRINK IS AND TIPS FOR LOWERING RISK AT:**

[www.cancer.ca/en/prevention-and-screening/live-well/alcohol/](http://www.cancer.ca/en/prevention-and-screening/live-well/alcohol/)

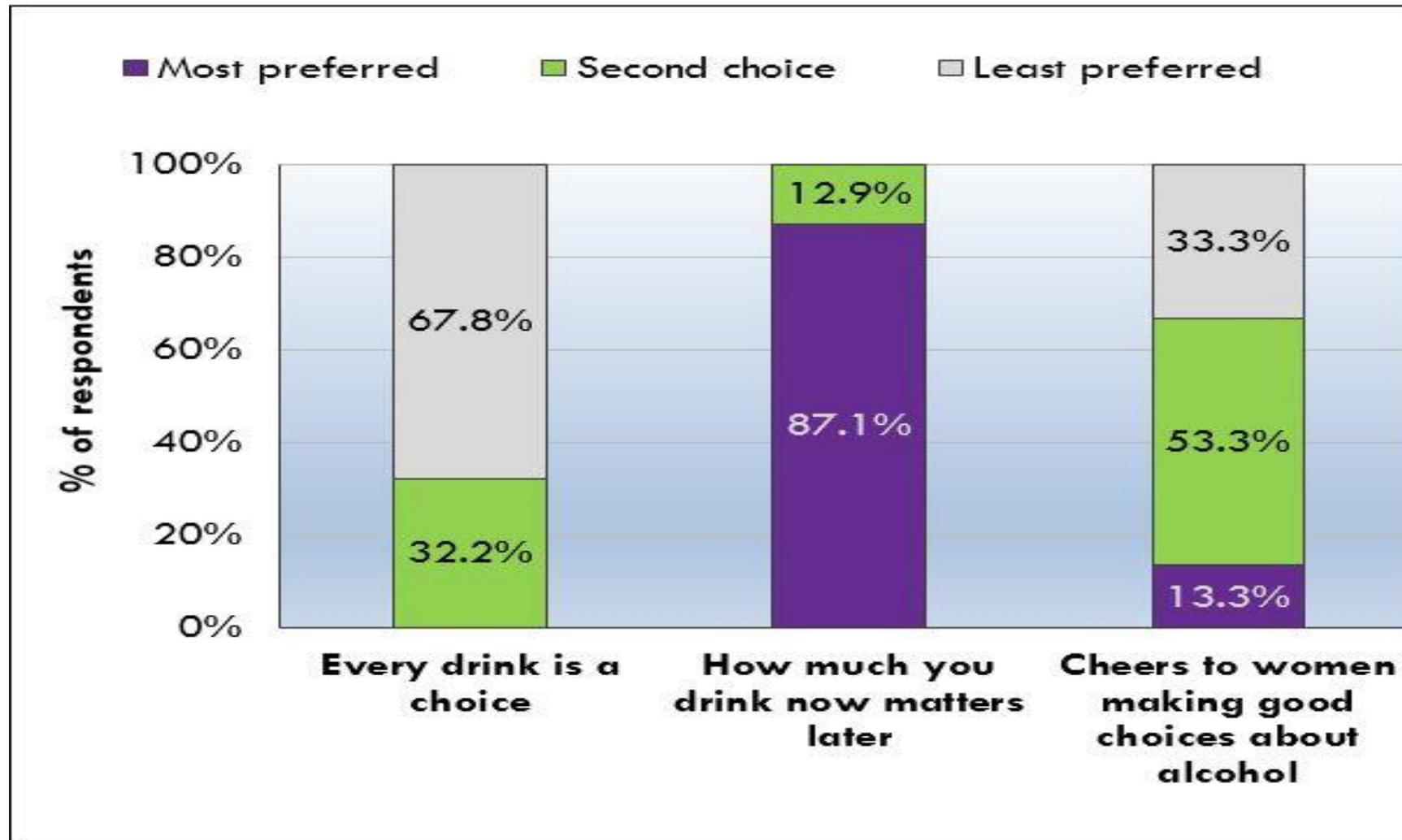
# Methods (cont'd)

- Conducted educational session about alcohol and breast cancer relationship after testing (10 minute)
- Pre/post assessments: knowledge/beliefs about connection, and its impact on intentions around current and future drinking (immediately prior to start and at end of 1.5 hour FG)
- Analyses: percentage tabulations, thematic analysis, and difference of proportions
- Revised “most preferred” message theme and elements based on FG results; re-tested two new versions on small group of study participants (6/31) to confirm preferred elements

# Results: Participants

- Mean age: 20.25 yrs.
- 29% lived on campus, 52% lived off-campus, 19% lived at home
- Most students from UW (n=22)
- Various fields of study
- No Hx of 1<sup>st</sup> degree female relative with breast cancer; 1/3 had Hx of 2<sup>nd</sup> degree

# Results: Overall Message Preference



# Results: Thematic Analysis

## Themes around effectiveness:

- **Design Features** (images; bubbles)
- **Credibility** (high enough risk stat, e.g., 30% increased risk or more)
- **Relatability** (who, where, what, how, frequency)
- **Clarity** (connection must be clear at start—e.g., pink, female form; “causal” confused with “casual”)



*“Having a glass of wine every single day isn’t probably the way students consume their alcohol.”*

*“How much risk, is it 2% or 50% increase? How worried should I be about how much I drink now?”*

# Results: Thematic Analysis

- **Emotional Response** (judgement averse; requires seriousness, e.g. **carcinogen v. causes cancer**)
- **Intention to Act** (**reduce v. abstain**)
- **Accessibility of additional information** (URLs not good for posters; **prefer apps**)



*"...alcohol is a carcinogen... when I read that I was shocked."*

*"I like the app... it's helping you think about what you're drinking, you know, keep track of it, make sure you're not going overboard."*

# Final Versions

## Alcohol and Breast Health...

How much you **drink** now matters **later**.



### DID YOU KNOW?

Alcohol is a **carcinogen** that fuels estrogen which drives the growth of **breast cancer** cells.

8 standard drinks a week, before first pregnancy, may **increase** breast cancer **risk** by over **30%**.

The more you drink over your **lifetime** the greater the **risk** — **harmful effects** of drinking in your teens and 20's **last**.



EVERY DRINK, AT ANY TIME COUNTS. USE THE FREE "SAYING WHEN" APP TO TRACK YOUR DRINKING AND REDUCE YOUR BREAST CANCER RISK.



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# Results: Communication Channels

- **Social media is the best channel— Instagram #1**
- **Strategically placed posters** also deemed very useful:
  - High-traffic campus areas not competing with other posters: **outside of lecture halls, inside bathroom stalls, in elevators, campus residence buildings**
  - On- and off-campus where alcohol can be consumed and/or purchased.
- **Doctors and nurse practitioners** rated most impactful inter-personal messengers (55%)



# Results: Knowledge/Intentions

Significantly greater proportion of participants showed increases in:

- ✓ **Knowledge** that alcohol consumption has the **most significant connection** to female breast cancer compared to other lifestyle/nutritional factors
- ✓ **Knowledge** that it is a dose-response relationship: **any amount most days can increase risk**
- ✓ **Intention to re-think whether, and how much, to drink now and in the future**

# Discussion: Key Highlights

- Confirmed **low awareness** about alcohol-breast cancer connection prior to participation
- Even though potential consequence (i.e., breast cancer dx) is in distant future, **students were very interested, wanted to share info, and indicated it would affect current and future consumption** (at least they're thinking about it!)
- Critical to **ensure relatability** to specific audience when choosing **images** and **framing risk behaviour**

# Discussion: Message Design/Development

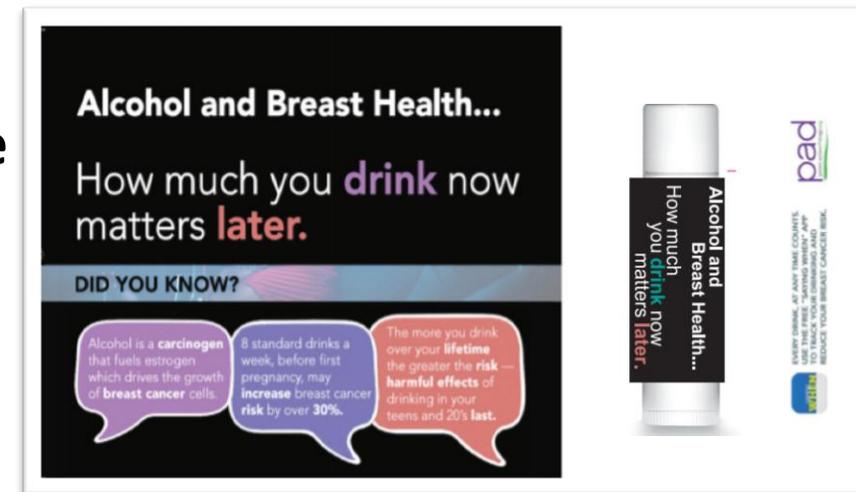
- Recommend that messages include these important elements:
  - **Numerical relative risk statistics** to boost credibility
    - Should be **significantly large** enough to warrant caring, as defined by your audience
  - **Words that elicit a more serious emotional response**
  - **Easy to remember and access resources/tools** to promote seeking additional knowledge and reducing risk

# Discussion: Message Delivery

- **Messages/ads need to be adaptable for social media** (GIF, or multiple static messages posted over a defined period of time, e.g., 1x/week for three weeks)
- **Print is not dead!** Students do look at posters in strategic places
- **Routine screening** for alcohol consumption by **campus primary care providers** and initiating conversations about cancer risk (posters in exam rooms, provide handouts, etc.) could be effective strategy to reduce consumption

# What's next?: Getting the message out

- **Awareness ads** printed and ready to be posted on campus at participating schools
- **A GIF version** of the ad has been created for social media
- **Promotional items** (i.e., scroll pens and lip balms) with an accompanying info palm card
  - To be distributed to campus health services **primary care providers, women's sports teams and clubs, and at student health fairs** on campus
  - Potential to include in **freshman packets** in the fall if residence life interested



# To Learn More...

- Project video link  
<https://vimeo.com/252223457>
- Let us know what you think and if you share it with colleagues as a knowledge exchange tool.
- For project report:  
<http://parentactionondrugs.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/15K-Final-Project-Report-Summary.pdf>



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**Conestoga College Residence**

**Wilfrid Laurier University, Campus Health and Wellness Centre**

# Questions



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