

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE UNTIL: 11 a.m. ET, Wednesday, August 29

Video News Release Available: Satellite Downlink Coordinates 9 to 9:30 a.m. ET on Galaxy 3R, transponder 14 (C-Band); and from 2 to 2:30 ET on Telstar 6, transponder 4 (C-Band) Contact: Barry Cohn (312) 464-4579

Contacts:

**Lisa Erk, Communications Director
A Matter of Degree
(312) 464-4532**

**Troy Petenbrink
Fenton Communications
(202) 822-5200**

**BINGE DRINKING A TOP CONCERN FOR PARENTS AS STUDENTS
HEAD BACK TO COLLEGE**

**New American Medical Association Survey Finds Overwhelming Support for
Strong Measures to Reduce High-Risk Drinking – Releases Checklist to Help Parents
Assess their Child’s Risk**

Chicago – Parents of college students have more worries than the cost of their child’s education: 95 percent believe excessive alcohol consumption is a serious threat to their children, and 85 percent say that the easy availability of alcohol in college communities contributes to too much drinking.

These national survey findings were released today by the A Matter of Degree (AMOD) program of the American Medical Association (AMA), with support from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Through AMOD, 10 of the nation’s leading universities participate in a national pilot project to reduce binge drinking and its harmful effects on college communities. Rather than approaching binge drinking solely as an individual problem, AMOD uses powerful campus-community partnerships to counter factors that contribute to binge drinking, including cheap drink specials such as \$1 pitchers and 2-for-1 shots, too many bars near campus, and illegal sales to underage students. Parents strongly favor such public policies to curb social influences that promote high-risk drinking, the study found.

Nationally, the number of students who frequently binge drink, meaning they binged three or more times in two weeks, is on the rise. Forty-four percent of college students binge, and nearly one in four do so frequently, placing themselves and others at risk for numerous alcohol-related harms, including sexual assault and other violence, traumatic injury, and death by alcohol overdose.¹

“Parents recognize the role that easy access to inexpensive alcohol plays in this complex public health issue, and they want to see change,” said J. Edward Hill, MD, AMA chair-elect. “The majority no longer perceive college binge drinking as a rite of passage – they see it as a major public health threat.”

Key Survey Findings

Parents recognize that campus-community factors influence high-risk drinking:

- 93 percent believe that easy access to abundant sources of alcohol is a major cause of excessive drinking
- 80 percent said that cheap beer and shots and all-you-can-drink specials are important contributing factors to binge drinking
- 79 percent identified beer and liquor company advertising and other promotions and sponsorships as an important contributing factor, while 76 percent said that football tailgate parties contribute to high-risk drinking
- 81 percent said they feel more comfortable sending their child to a college that has strong policies or programs to deter underage and binge drinking

Registered voters support a broad range of public policy solutions:

- 92 percent support enhanced enforcement of laws prohibiting alcohol sales to underage persons
- 80 percent favor restricting access to college bars to patrons aged 21 and older
- 89 percent support increased penalties on retail establishments that serve underage or intoxicated customers, and 81 percent favor increased liability for such retailers
- 78 percent support limiting the number and location of bars close to college campuses
- 77 percent favor banning alcohol advertising in college sports, and 73 percent would bar drink special advertisements from college newspapers

A Matter of Degree also released a “Top 10” checklist of campus-community warning signs to help parents assess their child’s risk for alcohol-related problems. For example: Does the college have a clearly defined alcohol policy that is consistently enforced? Is the campus surrounded by bars? If so, do they promote drink specials that encourage excessive drinking? Visit www.stopcollegebingeing.com for the complete list.

A New Approach to an Old Problem

A Matter of Degree: The National Effort to Reduce High-Risk Drinking Among College Students (AMOD) is administered by the AMA Office of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse, and funded by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

The 10 campus-community partnerships of AMOD go beyond traditional prevention efforts that focus on the individual drinker, recognizing that the social environment also influences individual decision making. These “town-gown” collaborations – among college administrators, elected officials, students, parents, law enforcement, concerned bar owners and others – work together to address alcohol advertising and marketing, institutional policies and practices, local ordinances, and cultural beliefs and behaviors, factors that converge to encourage high-risk drinking.

The study of 801 U.S. residents, 21 years of age and older, was conducted by Penn, Schoen and Berland Associates of Washington, DC. Margin of error is +/- 3.5 percent at the 95th percentile confidence interval level.

#####

¹ College Drinking in the 1990s: A Continuing Problem; Journal of American College Health, Vol. 48, March 2000