Alcohol & Drug Abuse on Study Abroad Programs: Pre-departure Planning & Collaboration

Kim Finegold, NP & Sarah Porat, MFT
UCSB Student Health Alcohol & Drug Program

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Overview of Presentation

• Current substance use trends on college campuses
• How much are college students using alcohol and drugs on study abroad?
• What are the risks of substance use while studying abroad?
• How do we collaborate pre-departure?
• How can we implement this on our campus?
• Some real life examples…
Current Trends on College Campuses

- **78.6%** of college students consumed alcohol in the last year (65.9% consumed alcohol in last 30 days)

- **34.1%** of students who drink report binge drinking in previous two weeks  
  **binge drinking is defined as 4 or 5 drinks per occasion**

- **15.9%** of students have used marijuana in the last 30 days

- **12.9%** have used an illegal drug other than marijuana in the past 30 days

- Figures have remained relatively constant over time with some increase in marijuana and other illegal drug use

Source: National College Health Assessment 2011
Source: Safer California Universities Study conducted by Prevention Research Center, 2010

National College Health Assessment 2011

**Alcohol Use and Consequences:**

Students’ experiences related to alcohol within the last 12 months

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Note: The graph shows the percentage of students experiencing different consequences of alcohol use.
Summary of Current Concerns

• High risk ("binge") drinking continues to be the primary concern on college campuses nationwide

• Marijuana use and potency have both increased dramatically, and have been causing more serious problems for students

• Increasing concern over abuse of painkillers (opiates: oxycontin, vicodin, heroin) and sedatives (benzodiazepines: xanax, valium)

• Increasing concern over “poly-drug use:”
  • Non-medical, illegal use of prescription drugs combined with alcohol
  • Legitimately prescribed medications (such as anti-depressants, anti-anxiety, and ADHD medications) combined with alcohol use (particularly excessive use)

What Happens Abroad...

• Alcohol is the drug of choice, as on most college campuses. Our main concern is “binge” or “high risk” drinking.

• Research suggests students may double or even triple their alcohol consumption when studying abroad and that those who drank heavier while abroad returned home to drink at elevated levels¹

• Speculation describes reasoning as the “spring break” mentality

• Marijuana is also a concern, especially for students traveling from states with more liberal laws to international destinations with more strict laws

¹Pedersen, Larimer, & Lee, 2010
Recent Research on Study Abroad

- **Positive expectations** about the effects of alcohol use can lead to elevated consumption\(^2\)
  - Tension reduction or enhanced sociability

- “**Liquid Courage**” increased anxiety in social situations due to immersion in foreign culture\(^2\)

- Perceived differences between home and host culture influences consequences\(^2\)

- Study abroad students are a **self-selected, heavier drinking, biased sample of American college students**\(^3\)

\(^2\)Hummer, Pedersen, Mirza, & LaBrie, 2010
\(^3\)Pedersen, LaBrie, Hummer, Larimer, & Lee, 2010

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Risk Factors while Abroad

- Lower drinking age in host countries
- Alcohol more readily available
- Higher alcohol content
- Developmental Stage & Maturity Level
- Pre-departure expectations
- Difficulty acclimating to culture
- Culture related social anxiety
- Far from support system and familiar coping strategies
Alcohol Related Consequences While Abroad

- Arrest
- Serious Injury
- Physical Assault
- Sexual Assault & Unwanted Sexual Contact
- Promiscuous & Risky Sexual Behavior
- Property Destruction & Uncivil Behavior
- Dismissal from housing, EAP program, and country
- Death

Other Clinical Considerations

Is alcohol and drug use all about getting high?

- Underlying mental health issues
- There are secondary reasons for substance use
  - Self-medication
  - Self-esteem/confidence
  - Popularity/acceptance
- Replacement for coping skills
- Replacement for social skills
- The “only way” to have fun and feel better
History of Collaboration

- Converted from group and in-person health clearance appointments to an online health clearance process in 2008

- Overview of EAP Health Clearance Process
  - Review EAP Confidential Health Questionnaire
  - Chart Review
  - Protocols for determining when student needs further evaluation before completion of health clearance

- Clearing clinicians were noticing “red flags” in terms of substance use

- Discussion with UCSB Alcohol & Drug Program and collaboration on protocol

ADP - EAP Health Clearance Referral Process

Appropriate Referrals to ADP for EAP Clearance:
(If any of the following criteria are met)

- Student has participated in a mandated group program within the last 6 months
- Student has attended counseling with an ADP counselor in the last 6 months
- Student reports problems with substance abuse on the online EAP health form
- On the SHS health history form:
  - Student reports drinking 15+ drinks per week
  - Student has passed out or had memory blanks 2 or more times within the last 6 months
  - Student has felt like he/she should cut down on drinking within the last 6 months
  - Student smokes marijuana 2 or more times per week within the last month
  - Student has used other recreational drugs within the last 6 months
- Chart Review indicates substance related injuries or illness or ER admission for substance related concern
After the referral to ADP...

Referral Procedure

- Clinician refers student to ADP
- Student meets with ADP Counselor for brief intervention
- Student may be cleared after one session with ADP Counselor
- Student may be required to return for additional sessions
- When student returns for additional sessions
  - gather information regarding the specific country and laws
  - reminded of UC policies regarding EAP travel
  - Create safety plan and discuss techniques to improve safety
  - The ADP counselor will collaborate with clearing clinician and refer any concerns to SHS Medical Director for final decisions regarding student’s health clearance.

Brief Intervention

- Drinkers receiving a brief intervention are **twice as likely** to reduce their drinking over 6 – 12 months than those who receive no intervention.

- Brief interventions have proven to be effective and have become increasingly valuable in the management of individuals with hazardous and harmful drinking

- **Brief interventions** are those practices that aim to identify a real or potential alcohol problem and motivate an individual to do something about it.

- The goal of the intervention is to increase student’s motivation to change their behavior by examining alcohol related consequences

*Department of Mental Health and Substance Dependence at the World Health Organization*
How to Implement on Your Campus

- Partner with the Substance Abuse Experts on your campus
  - Alcohol & Drug Counselor
  - Health Promotion Department
  - Counseling Center

- Develop some guidelines for referral to your Substance Abuse Expert

- Have substance use brief intervention be a part of the health screening process for selected individuals

Case #1: Common Example of Screening

Jessica

- Health History Form Referral
- History of black outs and regrettable behavior from previous year
- Drinking heavily and wanted to cut back
- Her plan prior to departure
  - Eliminate hard alcohol
  - Reduce # of days drinking
  - Reduce # of drinks per occasion
- Results = No black outs and no other negative consequences
- Her safety plan while abroad
  - Continue moderating alcohol use using risk reduction techniques
  - Extra caution in host country
- Marijuana use 1x/week
  - Social use or at night
  - Not for self medication of mental health symptoms
  - Able to stop smoking for periods of time
- Plan while abroad
  - Avoid marijuana… she is trying to get the most of her experience
  - No time to smoke since more common when bored
  - Reviewed laws regarding alcohol and drugs in her host country

*All names have been changed and stories altered to preserve confidentiality*
Case #2: Motivated Example of Screening

Carrie

- Recent memory blanks
- Concerned about black outs and other risks
- Appropriately concerned for safety while abroad
- Motivated to improve her drinking habits
- Returned for 3 counseling sessions
- Alcohol moderation techniques and eliminating black outs
- New system
  - counting her drinks
  - limiting her drinks
  - spacing her drinks out

Case #3: Complicated Example

Joe

- Daily Marijuana use and medical card
- Not interested in decreasing his use
- Thought he might decrease MJ use naturally… or continue use in host country w/o consequences
- Consultation with Student Health Medical Director
- Country specific information from UCEAP was presented to Joe
- He understood the information that was presented
- He did not think that he needed to decrease his marijuana use
Case #4: Disciplined Abroad

Jennifer

- Student was living with a host family while abroad
- She came home drunk on multiple occasions
- She also brought a drunk man home with her too
- Student was forced to move out of her accommodations due to these actions.
- Student met with the study program director
  - Took minimal responsibility for actions
  - Acknowledged being drunk and alone
  - Poor judgment about trusting a stranger to walk her home
- Probation for the remainder of her study abroad

Case #5: Dismissed from EAP

Alejandro

- First violation: allowed guests during his home stay
- Disciplinary letter from the Study Center Director
- Second violation: possession of marijuana
  - Medical prescription not valid in host country
- Alcohol abuse
  - Drank a bottle that belonged to his host family without permission
- Placed on probation in September
- Arrested two months later smoking marijuana in public and dismissed from EAP
Case #6: Supporting Sobriety Abroad

**Steve**

- Became sober the year before going abroad
- He had prior sessions with ADP Counselor
- During his health clearance, he met with an ADP counselor
- Continued meeting to support his sobriety
- Developed a plan for sobriety in a foreign country
  - Identified possible AA meetings in his host country
  - He planned on seeking out counseling through the EAP study center when he arrived

Case #7: Motivated Example of Screening

**Carmen**

- Frequent marijuana use
- Lack of knowledge about laws in host country
- Minimal thought had been given to marijuana use in host country
- Identified some negative consequences to MJ
- Agreed to research risks of marijuana use while abroad and to think more seriously about her intentions to use or abstain while abroad
- Two more visits
  - Cutting back on marijuana use
  - Motivation to change
  - Anticipated obstacles
  - Resources available.
- At the end of these 3 sessions, student verbalized commitment to abstaining from marijuana while abroad in order to avoid any problems and described a long term lifestyle goal of reducing or eliminating marijuana use overall
### 10 Things Every Student Should Know about Substance Use Abroad

1. If you decide to drink while abroad, remember to set limits and use good judgment.
2. Don’t use drugs, it’s against EAP policy. And could result in some really awful legal trouble. (Have you seen *Locked Up Abroad*?)
3. Research the laws and customs of your host country prior to departure.
4. Know where you are going and who you are with at all times… Use the Buddy System!
5. If you are living with a host family, be respectful. Don’t come home drunk and with a guest, unless you have permission. (Also, against EAP policy).
6. If you are drunk, you are leaving yourself vulnerable to being taken advantage of. Many theft and assault victims are targeted when making their way home from a late night out after drinking alcohol.
7. If you are caught with illegal drugs in a foreign country, you are subject to the drug laws of that country. They may or may not provide a jury trial or lawyer.
8. Public drunkenness is frowned upon in many countries and is an offense that may lead to jail.
9. Don’t give Americans a bad rap!
10. Don’t you want to REMEMBER your year abroad???

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You are excited to go abroad… make the most of your year, try not to let alcohol or drugs interfere with taking advantage of all the opportunities offered to you!
Overview & protocol description:
The Alcohol & Drug Program (ADP) will be involved in assessing some Education Abroad Program (EAP) students who may be at risk for alcohol and drug problems. Clinicians who are performing online EAP clearances will refer designated students to an ADP Counselor before being cleared for study abroad.

Areas of Responsibility:
ADP Counselors will assess history of substance use, current patterns of substance use, and safety plans while abroad in a foreign country.

Protocol Detail:
I. Appropriate Referrals to ADP for EAP Clearance
   The clearing clinician will refer students for an appointment with ADP if any of the following criteria are met:
   - Student has participated in ADP substance abuse program within the last 6 months (mandated due to violation of residence hall policies or law enforcement citations)
   - Student has attended counseling with an ADP counselor in the last 6 months
   - Student reports problems with substance abuse on the online EAP health form
   - On the SHS health history form:
     1. Student reports drinking 15+ drinks per week
     2. Student has had memory blanks 2 or more times within the last 6 months
     3. Student has felt like he/she should cut down on drinking within the last 6 months
     4. Student smokes marijuana 2 or more times per week within the last month
     5. Student has used other recreational drugs within the last 6 months
   - Upon review of PnC chart notes and all health information, the clinician indicates a need for an alcohol and drug evaluation

II. Referral Procedure
   - The clearing clinician will send a secure message to the student advising him or her of the need to make an appointment with an ADP counselor before the health clearance can be completed. A dot macro is available with information about why the student is being referred, to whom, how to make the appointment, and that there is no cost for the referral.
   - After seeing the student, the ADP counselor will write a chart note in PnC and CC the referring clinician. The chart note will indicate if the ADP counselor recommends:
     - Student is cleared by ADP in terms of alcohol and drug use
     - Student is required to return for an additional counseling session
   - When a student is required to return for an additional counseling session, he/she will be encouraged to gather information regarding the specific country in order to develop a personal safety plan. Student will be provided with, and reminded of, UC policies regarding EAP travel. The ADP counselor will collaborate with clearing clinician and refer any concerns to SHS Medical Director for final decisions regarding student’s health clearance.
Top 10 Things Every Student Should Know About Substance Use Abroad!

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5. If you are living with a host family, be respectful. Don’t come home drunk and with a guest, unless you have permission. (Also, against EAP policy).

6. If you are drunk, you are leaving yourself vulnerable to being taken advantage of. Many theft and assault victims are targeted when making their way home from a late night out after drinking alcohol.

7. If you are caught with illegal drugs in a foreign country, you are subject to the drug laws of that country. They may or may not provide a jury trial or lawyer.

8. Public drunkenness is frowned upon in many countries and is an offense that may lead to jail.

9. Don’t give Americans or your school a bad rap!

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The Ultimate I.V. Party Guide
Eating a full meal while you drink or alternate alcohol with soda or water can slow the absorption of alcohol and help you stay within your limits.

Set a limit on how many drinks you will have. Keep track of your drinks by recording it on your phone, arm, or even just telling it to a friend. This way you'll know when you've had enough.

Drink slowly. Allow time between drinks and avoid chugging. This will help prevent you from becoming intoxicated too quickly.

Be cautious of drinking games. They encourage over-consumption and can lead to dangerous BAC. If you choose to play drinking games, think about limiting the amount of games you play, allowing time between games, and/or reducing the amount of alcohol in each game.

Keep an eye on your drink. It can be easy for someone to slip something into an unattended drink.

Avoid mixing different types of alcohol. This can lead to over-intoxication and can make you sick.

Avoid mixing alcohol with other drugs. Certain combinations are dangerous. Know the risks of mixing substances.

Just hold it. You can get a ticket for urinating in public. Start looking for a bathroom before it becomes urgent.

Have an exit plan. Plan the time to leave before the party even starts. Stick with your friends throughout the party and when it comes time to leave, make sure you leave with the people you came with. Remember don't drive or bike under the influence.

Keep an eye on your friends. If at any time during or after a party, you suspect a friend has alcohol poisoning, immediately call 911. The cost of losing a friend is much greater than the cost of an ambulance. The paramedics prioritize medical matters over legal matters, so do not hesitate to call for help.
Medical Emergencies:
If there is a possible alcohol poisoning or drug overdose at a party call 911 immediately. Serious medical complications or death are much worse than a hospital bill.

Resources:
- AS Legal Resource Center: (805) 893-4540, www.as.ucsb.edu/cltc
- UCSB Alcohol & Drug Program: (805) 893-6179, alcohol@ucsb.edu
- Counseling Services: (805) 893-4411, www.counseling.ucsb.edu
- Women's Center: (805) 965-2728, www.ucsb.edu/women
- CSO Escorts: (805) 993-2000, police.ucsb.edu
- UC Police Department: (805) 893-1446, police.ucsb.edu

Life of the Party is all about living it up in all the right ways. We are a student group that encourages our fellow Gauchos to have fun in the Isla Vista and Santa Barbara social scenes and enjoy it regret-free.

Check out our Website:
LifeoftheParty.sa.ucsb.edu

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