



Designate a Sober Driver.

Impaired Driving

PCH Wellness 201-02

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Introduction

I chose to do my fact sheet on impaired driving because it is something that I have always been against. I never agree with anyone's decision to drink and drive. I think that it is the most idiotic thing that someone can do. When you get behind the wheel after you have been drinking, you not only put your life at risk, but you put other's lives at risk as well. Most people think that only after one drink, they are completely in control and are able to drive, but they do not realize that alcohol affects your peripheral vision and your reaction time as well.

"Every day, almost thirty people in the United States die in motor vehicle crashes that involve an alcohol-impaired driver." I was very interested in the statistics and data as well. One of my friends that I graduated high school with took his own life as well as his girlfriend in a car accident after making the decision to drink heavily and then get behind the wheel. Hopefully tragic incidents like this make people open their eyes and realize they are dealing with a deadly decision and do not drink and drive. I want to learn more about this to educate others so everyone is aware to save as many lives as possible.

Section 1: Background and Problem Statement

- Web site #1 Name: Injury and Violence Prevention
- Web Address:
<http://healthypeople.gov/2020/topicsobjectives2020/ibr.aspx?topicid=24>
- Background Information:

In Healthy People 2020, I found many links related to impaired driving. Most of the links that I found related to how to stop impaired driving. It states that it is very clear that impaired driving is a huge problem in our society and it is taking the lives of many innocent people. The legal blood alcohol concentration is 0.08% and anything over that is illegal and can result in serious consequences. A driver can lose their license for a long period of time; they can get arrested or be put in jail. In Healthy People, it doesn't really give much background information on impaired driving. They have more links on how to prevent this from happening.

- Web site #2 Name: Injury Prevention & Control: Motor Vehicle Safety
- Web Address:
http://www.cdc.gov/MotorVehicleSafety/Impaired_Driving/impaired-driv_factsheet.html
- Background Information:

In this article, it states that this problem of impaired driving is huge. “In 2009, 10,839 people were killed in alcohol-impaired driving crashes, accounting for nearly one-third (32%) of all traffic-related deaths in the United States” That’s an unbelievable high number and proves their point that this is out of control. Impaired driving means operating a motor vehicle while affected by alcohol or affected by illegal or legal drugs. Some other contributions are being too sleepy, distractions while driving, or having a medical condition that affects your driving. The risk of being involved in a crash is greater for young people than older people. Young people tend to have a greater blood alcohol concentration and make the fatal decision to get behind the wheel. According to this Web site, “Among drivers with BAC levels of 0.08 % or higher involved in fatal crashes in 2009, more than one out of every 3 were between 21 and 24 years of age (35%). The next two largest groups were ages 25 to 34 (32%) and 35 to 44 (26%).” BAC levels are very critical and not many know what some typical effects are to the body and to the driving as well. The higher the BAC rises, the more serious the effects are. For example, at .02%, there is some loss of judgment, relaxation and altered mood to the person. The effects on driving are decline in visual functions and the decline in ability to perform two tasks at the same time. When the BAC rises to .08%, muscle coordination becomes poor, judgment; self control and memory are impaired. In addition to that, while driving there’s no concentration, speed control, impaired perception and reduced information processing capability. Impaired driving is a huge problem and it is destroying lives and families and we need to do everything in our power to try to prevent this from happening.

- Web site #3 name: Alcohol Impaired Driving
- Web address: <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/pubs/810985.pdf>
- Background information:

This article sums up the definition of impaired driving and that it is considered impaired driving when the driver’s BAC is over 0.08%. According to the Web site, “In 2007, 12,998 people were killed in alcohol-impaired-driving crashes. These alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities accounted for 32 percent of the total motor vehicle traffic fatalities in the United States.” The blood alcohol content measures how much alcohol is in someone’s blood. If this number exceeds the legal limit, serious consequences will be ordered. Many drivers that are driving under the influence have a BAC over the legal limit and are a big chunk of the drivers that get into car accidents or even fatalities. “Estimates of alcohol-impaired driving are generated using BAC values reported to the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) and imputed BAC values when they are not reported. The term “alcohol-impaired” does not indicate that a crash or a fatality was caused by alcohol impairment.”

Section 2: Research

- Web site #1 Name: Drunk Driving Research
- Web address: <http://www.centurycouncil.org/learn-the-facts/drunk-driving-research>
- Summary of the research

With the result of sky rocketing numbers of people who died in car crashes over the last two years, they have been doing research to inform people that car crashes are among the cause of leading deaths in America. “According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) 33,808 people died in traffic crashes in 2009 in the United States (latest figures available), including an estimated 10,839 people who died in alcohol-impaired driving crashes. Drunk driving fatalities accounted for 32% of all traffic deaths last year, that is, on average, someone is killed in an alcohol-impaired driving crash about every 50 minutes in the U.S. (Source: NHTSA/FARS, 2010)” They have also made it a point to research the alcohol impaired fatalities in the youth under twenty one. According to the NHTSA, unfortunately, motor vehicle crashes remain the leading cause of death for 15- to 20-year olds. (Source: NHTSA, Traffic Safety Facts “Young Drivers,” 2009) In 2008, 12 percent of all drivers involved in fatal crashes were young drivers age 15 to 20 years old. More specifically, 5,864 15- to 20-year old drivers were involved in fatal crashes, including 2,739 driver fatalities. Among 15- to 20-year old drivers involved in fatal crashes, 31% of the drivers who were killed had been drinking and 25% who were killed in crashes had a BAC of .08 or higher. Furthermore, nearly two percent of these young drivers involved in a fatal crash had a previous DWI conviction. (Source: NHTSA, Traffic Safety Facts “Young Drivers,” 2009)

- Web site #2 name: DUI Foundation: Educate and Prevent
- Web address: <http://www.duifoundation.org/research/>
- Summary of the research:

There is a lot of research going on with the issue of driving under the influence of alcohol. The number of research projects and people contributing to the collection is multiplying. Many of the research will expand the capability to prevent drunk driving, stop all of the accidents caused by drunk drivers and, most importantly, save lives. According to the article, scientific studies are revealing previously unknown links that spell out the relationship between drinking and driving. How does alcohol really affect coordination, decision-making, and overall driving ability? What are the main causes of drinking and driving related accidents? It is only through expanding our factual database that we can work towards solutions. There is ongoing research that is revealing new statistics and research on underage drinking and they are asking questions that are being taken into much consideration among projects and organizations to help figure it out. “Ongoing research is revealing new statistics on underage drinking.

Why do kids drink? What steps can be taken to prevent underage drinking and bad decision-making from an early start? How can abstinence from alcohol be cool? How can students help spread the word? These kinds of questions are being taken into consideration by projects such as the NIAAA's Underage Drinking Research Initiative and research and fact-gathering organizations such as the Drug Free Action Alliance.”

- Web site #3 name: Learn the Facts about Drunk Driving and Underage Drinking
- Web site address: <http://www.centurycouncil.org/learn-the-facts>
- Summary of the research:

This Web site is based on the Century Council and the research that they have conducted and found. As a result, they have found and been able to make tremendous progress on this issue. According to the Web site, “Since 1982, alcohol-impaired driving fatalities on our nation's roadways have decreased 49% and among persons under 21 these fatalities have decreased 73%. In addition to tracking national drunk driving statistics, we have conducted proprietary research that is routinely used to convey the magnitude of the hardcore drunk driving problem and highlight effective strategies and tactics aimed at reducing the carnage caused by these drivers on our roadways.” Though progress is being made, underage drinking and driving under the influence remains a huge issue in our society. According to the 2009 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, about 10.4 million Americans between ages 12-20 report current alcohol consumption; this represents about 27% of this age group for whom alcohol use is illegal. Among 12-20 year olds, reported rates of past month consumption, binge drinking and heavy alcohol had been declining between 2002 and 2008, unfortunately 2009 data indicates that this trend may be ending.” We have to do all that we can in order to keep this research declining.

Section 3: Statistics

- Web site #1 name: SADD statistics
- Web address: <http://www.sadd.org/stats.htm>
- Summary of the statistics

This Web site gives tons of number statistics on impaired driving as well as drug use, underage drinking and traffic safety. Underage drinking is a big problem and here they back up their information with statistics. “During the past month (30 days), 26.4% of underage persons (ages 12-20) used alcohol, and binge drinking among the same age group was 17.4%.” This is not uncommon to hear of in our day, but it is still not safe or legal for any of this to be occurring. “Alcohol use remains extremely widespread among today’s teenagers.

Nearly three quarters of students (72%) have consumed alcohol (more than just a few sips) by the end of high school, and more than a third (37%) have done so by eighth grade.” Kids are starting to drink at younger ages and the ages have been decreasing very quickly. If kids are making bad decisions when they’re young to consume alcohol, chances are they’re not going to make the right decision whether to get behind the wheel of a motor vehicle or not either. “In 2008, an estimated 12.4% of persons ages 12 or older drove under the influence of alcohol at least once during the past year. The rate was highest among persons ages 21-25 (26.1%).” The fact that this number is increasing is unbelievable and the fact that twelve year olds are driving to begin with, is awful. The fact that they’re driving under the influence of alcohol is ridiculous. Something needs to be done in order to prevent this from happening. “In 2008, 11,773 people were killed in alcohol-impaired driving crashes, accounting for nearly one third (32%) of all traffic-related deaths in the United States.” That’s a tremendously high number and it’s so tragically sad to see.

- Web site #2 name: MADD Statistics
- Web address: <http://www.madd.org/statistics/>
- Summary of the statistics:

This Web site just lists all of the statistics one would like to know about alcohol, impaired driving, ages of the group that consumes alcohol and just shocking facts that should make everyone open their eyes and realize what they’re risking. “This year, 10,839 people will die in drunk-driving crashes - one every 50 minutes” The fact that they can just predict a number by going off previous knowledge and statistics is absolutely crazy. Hopefully this makes people realize to make smart decisions when they drive. They need to know to avoid any kind of impairment while driving, whether it is being stupid and consuming alcohol or using a cell phone to cause distraction. We need to get this number down and everyone needs to realize that it’s not worth it to risk your life for one night of going out and partying. Another statistic I found interesting was “An average drunk driver has driven drunk 87 times before first arrest.” This is just impossible to believe. This goes to show that our police have to start cracking down and do their job. If they see a car swerving, speeding or about to lose control, they should pull them over and get them off of the road. As a driver, that scares me to know that tons of people do this on a regular basis and get away with it so many times. Every time you drive, even if it’s just to school or to a friend’s house on a Friday night, your life is in danger because of all of the drunk drivers on the roads. Another fact that is shocking to hear is “Car crashes are the leading cause of death for teens and one out of three of those is alcohol related.” The majority of teenagers feel that they are invincible when it comes to driving under the influence and always think that nothing will happen to them because they have control over their actions. They are wrong because it can happen to anyone.

There is no proven way to prevent all underage drinking, but teenagers need to be smart and if they're going to go out and drink at someone's house they should sleep there or have someone be the designated driver. They shouldn't be putting their lives and others at risk.

- Web site #3 name: DUI Drunk Driving National Statistics
- Web site address: http://www.dui-usa.drinkdriving.org/Connecticut_ DUI_drunkdriving_statistics.php
- Summary of the statistics:

I thought that it would be very beneficial and interesting to look up the statistics of impaired driving in our own state of Connecticut. The results were very startling. The latest year that they had researched and given out information for was in the year 2007. "8,571 arrested in Connecticut for drunk driving / DUI" More than 8,000 people were arrested in one year in just one state for driving under the influence, this tells you right here there is a serious problem. "99 fatal accidents in Connecticut where at least one driver had a BAC of 0.08% or above." This statistic scares me because what if one of those 99 fatal accidents involved your best friend, your family members, or even yourself. It's so scary, I don't understand why people mess with risking their lives and others. "129 total deaths caused in Connecticut where at least one driver had a BAC of 0.01% or above." The legal BAC is 0.08%. These statistics are important to know and understand. There's no doubt in my mind that these numbers have increased over the past few years, I feel that no one will ever learn until it happens to them.

Section 4: Consumer Information

- Web site #1 name: Court: Restaurants, Bars Liable for Drunk Drivers
- Web site address: http://www.nj.org/news/index.ssf/2008/03/court_restaurants_bars_liable.html
- Summary of the information:

I thought that a huge consumer issue is in relation to impaired driving is the bars, restaurants and clubs that either serve alcohol to minors or are not responsible enough to cut off someone when they have had too much. According to this Web site, "In a precedent-setting decision, a state appeals court ruled today that a bar or restaurant can be held liable for allowing a patron to drive drunk although the person did not drink there. The ruling alters the state's so-called Dram Shop Act to hold that the staff of a business that sells alcoholic beverages is not only responsible for ensuring that a person who became drunk there is prevented from driving, they must make sure any person who entered in a state of drunkenness is stopped from driving."

This is a huge responsibility for a bartender to keep an eye on everyone that they possibly can. They have to take mental note of how many drinks they have served you to know when to cut you off. It's scary to know that someone's life can be in the hands of someone that they barely know. I just hope most bartenders take this seriously because they can end up liable for anything that happens.

- Web site #2: Restaurants and Bars Potentially Liable in Drunk Driving Accidents
- Web site address: <http://ocny.net/legal/personal-injury/restaurants-and-bars-potentially-liable-in-drunk-driving-accidents/>
- Summary of the information:

When someone finds out about a drunk driving incident, they are quick to right away blame it on the impaired driver, obviously. Apparently if this person was out drinking at a bar, restaurant or club, they can be held liable for this incident. According to this article, "Most obviously, many citizens point the finger at the intoxicated, and therefore impaired, driver. However, lawmakers may be changing this. It takes two to tango, so to speak, and the alcohol had to come from somewhere. Lawmakers are now dancing around with the idea of "Dram Shop Law" which would hold establishments that serve alcohol accountable when they provide liquor to an individual who is dangerously inebriated. But this type of law would apply to more than just businesses. In fact, it would apply to party hosts who serve alcohol in their homes. That's right. In the future, if you throw a party and one of your drunk friends stumbles out, gets in their car and then crashes, you could be held partially responsible." This takes things to a whole other level. Usually you feel that the safest place to have a few drinks with some good friends is at your home. If someone drinks with the alcohol provided at your house, you can be held liable. Everyone has to take precaution and know who is at their house and how much they have been drinking.

- Web site #3: Homeowners As Liable As Bar Owners During New Year's Eve Parties
- Web address: <http://www.myfox8.com/news/wghp-story-drunk-driving-homeowners-101230,0,7124096.story>
- Summary of the information:

There are many holidays throughout the year that involve partying and having a few glasses of wine to relax with family and friends. New Year's Eve is the most dangerous holiday to drive on. They have reported the most drunk driving accidents and fatalities than any other day of the year. So when the time comes to make your plans, you figure that you should stay home to avoid all of that risk, right? Wrong. If you're a homeowner and someone drinks and then decides to drive, you can be liable and have to pay for their mistake.

According to the article, “Any owner allowing people knowingly impaired to drive becomes open to criminal and civil liability. In a worst case scenario, that could mean getting sued.”

Section 5: Solutions to the Problem (or Issue)

- Web site #1 name: Alcohol Problems and Solutions
- Web site address: <http://www2.potsdam.edu/hanson/dj/DrinkingAndDriving.html>
- Summary of the information:

As stated above, impaired driving is a huge problem in the United States and serious measures and consequences have to be taken in order for everyone to learn. Drunk driving resists simple solutions like most social problems. Possible prevention measures that are listed on this Web site include establishing DWI courts, suspending or taking away driver licenses, impounding or confiscating vehicle plates, impounding vehicles, enforcing open container bans, increasing penalties such as fines or jail for drunk driving, and mandating alcohol education. Safety seat belts, air bags, designated drivers, and effective practical ways to stay sober should also be taken into consideration. A main point that this Web site puts into effect is DUI courts. It states “DWI courts, sometimes called DUI courts, sobriety courts, wellness courts or accountability courts have proven effective in reducing the crime of drunken driving (driving while intoxicated or while impaired). Such courts address the problem of hard-core repeat offenders by treating alcohol addiction or alcoholism. The recidivism or failure rate of DWI courts is very low.” That is good to know that courts are contributing to the prevention of this as best they can. Another solution that they think could be effective is taking away or suspending their license. “Automatic license revocation appears to be the single most effective measure to reduce drunk driving.” Though they think that this reduces drunk driving, there are many statistics that claim that a good percentage of the drunken driving crashes are caused by drivers with suspended licenses. They might need to take more serious measures in order for people to start following the law.

- Web site #2 name: Drunk Driving Can Be Stopped
- Web site address: <http://www2.potsdam.edu/hanson/dj/PreventingDrunkDriving.html>
- Summary of the information:

An effective way to reduce drunken driving accidents and fatalities is to always have a designated driver. A designated driver is simply a person who agrees to abstain from alcohol and be responsible for driving others home. According to the Web site, “Designated drivers have probably saved nearly 50,000 lives and spared many more thousands of people from suffering injury from drunk driving.

Over nine out of 10 Americans who attend social events where alcohol is served would like to see designated drivers used. And the proportion of people using or being a designated driver has increased dramatically over time. Each year over 73,000,000 Americans either serve as a designated driver or are driven home by one.” According to these statistics, choosing a designated driver has been very effective in reducing alcohol related crashes and fatalities. In my experience, I know that if I go out with my friends, we always have a designated driver. Usually it’s me because I am really not a fan of alcohol and I do not need it in order to have a good time. I would rather know that we have a safe ride home instead of letting loose and wondering how we’re going to get home that night. I encourage everyone to have a designated driver when they go out; usually it’s best to switch it up so it’s fair to everyone.

- Web site #3 name: Alcohol Abuse Prevention: Some Serious Problems
- Web site address: <http://alcoholfacts.org/CrashCourseOnMADD.html>
- Summary of the information:

There are many organizations and groups that are against alcohol and driving under the influence. Their goal is to educate as many people as they possibly can by sharing personal stories and encounters in hopes that it will touch you and get you to realize that this is a very serious matter that needs to be prevented. An example of one of these groups is MADD, Mothers Against Drunk Driving. “Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) was founded in 1980 by Candy Lightner, whose daughter was tragically killed by a drunk driver who was a repeat offender. The goal of MADD was to reduce drunk driving traffic fatalities and the organization has been highly effective in raising public disapproval of drunk driving. The proportion of traffic fatalities that are alcohol-related has dropped dramatically, in part because of MADD's good efforts.” I know that these programs really work and really get to people. For example, when I was in high school, once a year the police would have a mock crash on the football field to show students the danger of drinking and driving and how it can be fatal. They also have a presentation and speakers come into the school around the time of prom, where many students are faced with the choice of drinking and driving. The stories and pictures that they show are heartbreaking and really make you think otherwise when it comes to driving under the influence. At the end of the presentation, they always say the statement that scares everyone. “Look around now, this is your graduating class of 2008. When you come back for your reunion in 10-15 years, chances are not everyone will be there.” Everyone looks around and laughs because they don’t think that it could ever happen to them. In reality, our class has already lost someone to driving under the influence. Hopefully that makes everyone think twice before they get behind the wheel after they have been drinking.

Conclusions:

After doing all of my research on impaired driving, I have become a lot more knowledgeable on the topic. It has made me even more aware than I am now of all of the dangers and risks that this decision leads to. The percentage of deaths due to driving under the influence has sky rocketed over the past couple of years. Many drivers that are driving under the influence are teenagers that have a higher BAC (Blood Alcohol Content) than the legal limit of 0.08%. Teenagers, as well as adults are not aware of the effects that alcohol has on you after you have had a few drinks. It can lead to impaired vision, slow reaction time, and many other side effects that should not even put you behind the wheel. One of the ways to prevent this from happening is to always have a designated driver when you are going out with your friends for a night of partying. Other ways that have been proven successful deals with the police cracking down more on cases and punishments. Also, groups and organizations are making presentations and sharing life stories to let everyone know that it can happen to them. It always takes two to tango and there are many people that can become liable for this incident. If someone had been drinking heavily at a bar before they drove home and killed an innocent driver, the bar is liable. Even if you're home having a few friends over for some drinks and they end up driving home and get in a fatal car accident, you're to blame. I want everyone out there to know how serious this issue is, and to take all of the necessary precautions and make the right decision. Drunk driving destroys people, lives, and families. Don't let someone else's fate be in your hands.