Health & Medicine

Alcohol Abuse Rises on College Campuses

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Drinking on college campuses is practically accepted as a rite of passage in our society. But a major Columbia study provides a reality check: U.S. college students are abusing alcohol with increasing intensity and facing serious consequences as evidenced by physical injuries.

The four-year study, conducted by Columbia's National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA), shows that between 1993 and 2005 the proportion of students in this country who drank irresponsibly remained flat at about 40 percent. But the proportion of students who say they binge drank frequently shot up 16 percent, as did the proportion of those who say they drank more than 10 times a month, up 25 percent, and those who drank to get drunk, up 21 percent.

The proportion of college students who were injured as a result of their own drinking increased 38 percent from 1993 to 2001. The researchers also note that in 2001 about 97,000 students were victims of alcohol-related rape or sexual assaults.

The authors, led by CASA chair and president Joseph A. Califano, Jr., report that nearly 38 percent of college administrators say the most significant barrier to preventing student alcohol and drug abuse is public perception that such behavior is a normal part of the college experience. They also found that 37 percent of college students who abuse substances don't seek help because they fear social stigmatization.



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