

Taxing beer could decrease gonorrhea rates

■ A study asserting higher taxes on beer relates to lower rates of STDs is under fire by the scientific community

By Adam Jude
Oregon Daily Emerald

A recent study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) suggests that a higher tax on beer relates to a decreasing rate of gonorrhea, one of the most common sexually transmitted diseases among young adults.

Many, however, are skeptical about the CDC findings.

"It sounds very peculiar," University health educator Annie Dochnahl said. "Unless it was purposely set up to compare apples and oranges ... it's crappy

science."

The CDC report, "Gonorrhea Rates Decline with Higher Beer Tax," is based on a national study of 36 states where the alcohol tax increased from 1981 to 1995. The results were compared to the changes in gonorrhea rates among people aged 15 to 24 in the states that raised the tax vs. states that did not, said Cynthia Glocker, spokeswoman for the CDC sexually transmitted disease division.

Both Glocker and Dochnahl said that there are numerous studies that correlate alcohol consumption with unprotected sex

and sex with multiple partners.

"Alcohol has been linked to risky sexual behavior," Glocker said. "More particularly, alcohol is associated with high risk sex that can cause STD transmission more easily."

Glocker said that the beer tax increase is associated with a 75 percent decrease in the STD rate among 20- to 24-year-olds.

"CDC researchers estimate that a 20-cent state tax increase per six-pack of beer could reduce the U.S. gonorrhea rates by almost 9 percent," according to the report.

CDC also reported that gonorrhea rates dropped in the states that increased the legal drinking age.

"The Department of Health and Human Services has highlighted

higher alcohol prices and improved enforcement of the minimum legal drinking age regulations as potential strategies to

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further reduce teenage alcohol consumption," the report suggested.

University Health Center direc-

tor Dr. Gerald Fleischli said there are many variables that must be considered when this type of study is conducted and it doesn't appear that the CDC results reflect all of the possibilities.

"I think this is a case where correlation is not the same as causation," Fleischli said.

An editor's note appears at the end of the CDC report that states there are limitations to the discovery.

"Given these limitations, the study findings ... are consistent with but do not prove a causal relation between higher taxes and declining STD rates," the footnote stated.

Mrs. Oregon

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against everybody," she said.

But Tarver-Thompson said the contest was about much more than just winning.

She said contestants became friends over the weekend and encouraged each other to get through the stressful moments of the pageant.

"We would all stop and pray together," she said. "It was so neat to see all of us come together."

And there were some nerve-racking moments, not only during the contest, but also before. Tarver-Thompson said she had a

designer dress made to wear at the evening gown competition, but at the last moment, the dress, which she had spent more than \$300 on, just did not work out. Tarver-Thompson said it was just her luck that she happened to find a perfect replacement during a Good Friday sale for only \$9.99.

Tarver-Thompson said it was especially nerve-racking not to be able to see the other contestants on the stage; contestants waited backstage and were without sound as each woman presented herself to the judges.

But all the anxiety during the contest turned out to be worth it.

"It was just amazing. When

they finally called me, I just raised my hands in the air and I just kept saying "Thank you, Jesus," she said.

Heidi Albertson, the pageant's stage director, competed in the pageant in 1998. Albertson helps the women prepare for the on-stage appearances, by teaching them how to walk, turn and look at the judges.

Albertson said she had a great experience as a contestant herself and plans to continue to be involved in the pageant in the future.

"It's not just based on your outside beauty," she said. "It's based on your marriage, your family and

your community involvement. It's not a beauty pageant."

Tarver-Thompson said her wide involvement on campus and in the community has prepared her for her new role as Mrs. Oregon.

"I've done a lot of stuff and all that stuff has prepared me to be a spokesperson for Oregon, for the educational system," she said.

She said a number of sponsors, including the University's School of Journalism and Communication and Mercedes-Benz, believed in her and made her participation possible.

"I could not have done this without my sponsors," she said.

Tarver-Thompson's husband,

Jason Thompson, was with her all weekend, escorting her onto the stage and watching her from the audience.

He also got to put the crown on his wife's head at the end of the contest.

"It was a great experience," he said. "I was really happy to see that she was rewarded for all of her accomplishments."

Thompson said he thought all contestants were great and deserving to be in the competition, making it difficult to anticipate his wife's win.

"I really wanted to think, 'Oh yes, she's got it in the bag,' but I really couldn't," Thompson said.

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