

## **Assessing Alcohol Use in Pharmacy Students and Associated Factors**

### **Abstract:**

*Introduction:* This study's purpose was to collect information from pharmacy students about alcohol use, how it changed throughout pharmacy school, and motives for use. A secondary objective was to collect ideas and suggestions for resources or events that the Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUe) School of Pharmacy could provide as alternatives to alcohol use. The data collected from this study will be distributed to the Office of Professional and Student Affairs and the Wellness and Resilience Committee within the School of Pharmacy. Resources will also be shared with students for education on risks of alcohol use.

*Methods:* This observational, descriptive study utilizes an online, anonymous survey that was emailed to all SIUe School of Pharmacy students (first year through fourth year). This study was approved by the institutional review board (IRB #2174). The survey collected general demographics including year in school and employment status throughout the school year. Students were then asked a series of questions investigating current alcohol use and changes to alcohol use behaviors since enrollment in pharmacy school. Questions in this section also aimed to assess the motives behind alcohol use such as school stress, work stress, or celebrations. Finally, students were asked to provide suggestions for how the School of Pharmacy can provide support through events and resources that provide education and alternatives to alcohol use.

*Results:* The results of the survey indicated that 31% of participants averaged zero drinks per week, 32.5% of participants averaged 1 to 3 per week, 18% averaged 4 to 6 per week, 3.6% averaged 7 to 9 and the remaining 8.4% averaged 10 or more drinks per week. Most participants in year two through four of pharmacy school indicated that their alcohol use has either had no change or there was a slight increase/increase in use. The most frequently selected motivations for use were to be social and to celebrate. These motives were most frequently identified as motivation half of the time, almost always, and always by participants. Overall, the results indicate that the majority of students at the SIUe school of pharmacy do not use alcohol for school or work stress management and while many students are not exhibiting risky alcohol behaviors, 30% of students are averaging 4 or more drinks per week, which is indicative that students may be binge drinking weekly.

*Conclusion:* Overall, the results indicate a minimal change in alcohol use since starting pharmacy school. Most students reported that they do not use alcohol for stress management and most commonly use it in social settings and celebrations. Currently, students are not self-reporting high levels of risky alcohol behaviors, but implementation of suggested social events and further education on alcohol risks would be beneficial to student well-being.