

A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland at College Park *

CASA Responds to Criticisms of Its College Substance Abuse Report

After the publication of CESAR FAX Volume 4, Issue 11, "CASA Report on Substance Abuse on College Campuses Under Scrutiny," the Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) contacted CESAR regarding *Forbes Media Critic Magazine's* analysis of the CASA report, *Rethinking Rites of Passage: Substance Abuse on America's Campuses*. Below are excerpts of CASA's response. Reactions to either *Forbes Media Critic Magazine's* or CASA's views can be addressed directly to those organizations, at the phone numbers listed below.

Media Critic Reported That . . .

"As for CASA's figure of a 300 percent increase in the number of college women drinking to get drunk, . . . the survey that produced it was limited to . . . a handful of colleges in Massachusetts" and "compared apples and oranges--drinking by college students of all ages ('77) to that by freshmen only ('89)" (p. 5).

The statistic that 90% of all campus rapes are alcohol related "does not appear to exist in the published research." CASA reported the source as a 1992 Office for Substance Abuse Prevention bulletin, whose source for the figure is a 1991 University of Maine student newspaper article about an on-campus lecture. The lecturer cited a *Ms.* magazine study as the source (p. 4).

The figure that 60% of college women who have acquired sexually transmitted diseases were under the influence of alcohol at the time they were infected is cited by CASA as coming from an Advocacy Institute publication. That publication cites its source as a June 1990 University of California (UC) at Berkeley publication. According to the author of the UC publication, the statistic was taken "from a speech she had heard given by the director of student health services at the University of Wisconsin" and was "not intended to reflect any kind of original research" (p. 4).

CASA Replied That . . .

"The numbers come from a 1977 survey of all ages and a 1993 survey of all ages. Only fresh apples here."

"In fact, support for this number appears in the published research. A review published in the *Journal of American College Health*, also cited by CASA's Commission, found that 73% of assailants and 55% of rape victims used alcohol or drugs prior to the assault, which adds plausibility of alcohol involvement in 90% of all cases."

"The threat of AIDS among college students who drink is real. Surveys have indicated that individuals who are drinking alcohol are more likely to have sex and to have it without a condom. On page 20 of the report, the Commission noted that 'only 3,000 college students currently have tested positive for infection with the HIV virus' and concluded, 'What is now a comparatively rare phenomenon among college students may, in the future, become frighteningly common.'"

SOURCES: Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University. For further information, please contact Alyse Booth at 212-841-5200. Kathy McNamara-Meis, "CASA reports don't hold up against close scrutiny," *The Bacchus Beat*, February 1995, reprinted with permission from *Forbes Media Critic Magazine*. For further information, please contact Kathy McNamara-Meis at 908-781-2078.

* CESAR FAX is supported by a grant from the Governor's Drug and Alcohol Abuse Commission.
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.. 301-403-8329 (voice) .. 301-403-8342 (fax) .. CESAR@cesar.umd.edu (internet) ..