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CONTACT:
Mary Kay Jezzini
SAGE Publicist
212-352-1404
publicity@sagepub.com

DO WE NEED ALCOHOL PREVENTION PROGRAMS FOR “TWEENS?”
Research published by SAGE in *Health, Education & Behavior*

Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, and Singapore (April 2, 2008) – Much research has been conducted on the problems caused by alcohol abuse for both adults and teenagers. Recent studies, however, have shown that some kids are starting to drink earlier –even before sixth grade– opening up the door to many additional social, behavioral, and developmental problems. Research in the current issue of SAGE’s *Health, Education & Behavior* explores alcohol use and prevention possibilities for “tweens.”

The article examined a large study of six grade students across a metropolitan area, to see which factors distinguished young alcohol users from nonusers, including even their stated intentions regarding future alcohol use. Understanding that early alcohol use can affect development during a crucial time in life and can cause significant problems later, the researchers explored some current teen alcohol abuse prevention programs, concluding that even earlier intervention is imperative. The study looked at both positive and negative influences affecting early drinking, including such things as:

- Parental influences, including communication, monitoring, and expectations
- Peer influences, peers’ actual alcohol use and kids’ perceptions of peer use
- The environment, access to alcohol, owning and wearing alcohol-related items
- Kids involvement in sports, religious and other extra-curricular activities
- Use of other substances, including tobacco and marijuana

“Early users of alcohol are already at very high risk and earlier intervention is critical to alter risk factors while students are in their tweens,” write the authors. “Although some research has been done in the primary prevention of developmental problems with tweens, the data suggests that a specific focus on particular alcohol-related risk factors is also needed to affect those at highest risk for teen alcohol use.”

The article, “Sixth Grade Students Who Use Alcohol: Do We Need Primary Prevention Programs for ‘Tweens?’” written by lead author Keryn E. Pasch, PhD, MPH, of the University of Minnesota, and colleagues Cheryl L. Perry, PhD, MA, Melissa H. Stigler, PhD, MPH, of the University of Texas and Kelli A. Komro, PhD, MPH of the University of Florida, has been made available at no charge by SAGE for a limited time at <http://heb.sagepub.com/cgi/rapidpdf/1090198107308374v1>.

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Health Education & Behavior explores how social and behavioral changes affect health and quality of life. An official bimonthly publication of the Society for Public Health Education, the journal examines the process of planning, implementing, managing, and assessing health education and social-behavioral interventions, providing empirical research, case studies, program evaluations, literature reviews and discussions of theories relating to the status and strategies for improving social and behavioral health. <http://heb.sagepub.com>

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