



Chapter Nine

EXCERPT

ALCOHOL AND YOUR HEALTH: THE GREAT HOAX

It's not that you have been lied to. You've just been told a limited portion of the facts. The behemoth multinational corporations that market alcoholic beverages watch their stock prices soar every time a study is published demonstrating that alcohol is good for your health. And drinkers, many of whom are in denial that they have a problem or are in the early stage of alcoholism, can rationalize that their addiction is actually good for them. Is it really?

Mark Twain is quoted as saying that there are three kinds of falsehood: lies, damn lies, and statistics. So it is with data presented by the popular media regarding alcohol:

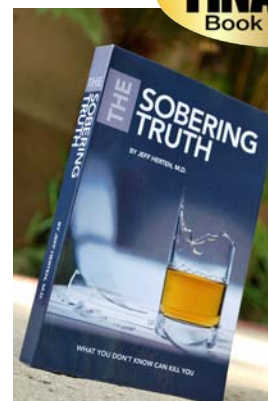
- The alcohol corporations' spin doctors tell you only what they want you to know.
- They have narrow and unrealistic definitions of terms that don't match the public perceptions of drinking.

Narrowly defined, "moderate alcohol consumption" lowers health risk from cardiovascular disease. But it raises risk for various cancers, hepatitis, osteoporosis, immune suppression, accidents, and suicide. They don't tell you that part. With selective filtration of the facts, the liquor industry continues to advocate alcohol as a beneficial part of a healthful diet. Moderate and heavy drinkers, with denial and rationalization fully operational, proclaim alcohol to be the fountain of youth.

In stark contrast, the health hazards that tobacco use causes outrages the American public. Class action suits, public service announcements, prohibition of smoking in public places, and health warnings on packages attest to the increased public awareness and sentiment against tobacco use. Like alcohol lobbyists today, tobacco lobbyists at one time hid the devastating health risks from the public.

Alcohol is contributory to nine different types of cancer and gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD). Its role in producing fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) accounts for 11 percent of the money spent for the treatment of mental retardation in this country. It is a leading cause of osteoporosis, suppresses the immune system, and is a major factor in highway deaths, spousal and child abuse, and homicide.

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For more Information, contact:
Jane Broshears
info@soberingtruth.com
Cell: 805-440-8384

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Chapter Nine, Continued

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Smokers harm only themselves and their immediate family through secondhand exposure. Alcohol harms randomly on the streets and highways of America and, in an ever-widening circle, the family and friends of the alcoholic. So why doesn't the package labeling on alcoholic beverages really reflect the extent of these hazards? It does ... somewhat:

Government Warning: (1) According to the surgeon general, women should not drink alcoholic beverages during pregnancy because of the risk of birth defects. (2) Consumption of alcoholic beverages impairs your ability to drive a car or operate machinery and may cause health problems.

Why isn't the public better informed? Why isn't the warning more explicit? It's because of the power and money of the alcohol industry.