



Alcoholism on college campuses: part 1

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@AU Collegian

The black pavement under her feet grew closer and closer in her field of vision as she walked down High Street.

Her friend’s high pitched laughter rang in her ears as she took in the scene around her, realizing her semi-blurry vision meant she had too much to drink.

“I remember at this point, I drank almost a full bottle of tequila,” Ohio State University student Laura Samuels said. “But we were on our way to a party and we were freshmen, so I pushed it to the back of mind, because I didn’t want to ruin the night for my friends and I.”

She managed to stumble her way to the house’s sidewalk, only falling twice the whole way there.

The door opened. Inside revealed the picture perfect college house party scene, she said.

The deejay booth was off to the left of the door with the drink bar to the right. A guy with brown spiky hair was serving pink drinks from a clear tote into bright red plastic cups. The word ‘Jungle Tote’ was written in black marker on the side.

Throwing back the pink liquid like it was water, Laura found her way to the dancefloor. Blue and white laser lights bounced off the walls as the large crowd began to jump and dance.

“The last thing I fully remember was walking into the house and seeing my friend Maria,” she said.

Maria Householder, a junior at OSU, was the designated driver that night, a decision she made after her last encounter with alcohol at a party.

Householder recalls seeing Laura at the over-crowded house party just before 11:30 p.m.

“I saw Laura when she first walked in,” Householder said. “Her cheeks were flushed and she couldn’t stand straight but she came over and hugged me before walking toward the drink station.”

In between making her driving rounds, Householder watched

Laura closely to make sure she was okay.

“I had just come back from my second round of driving people to the bars when I started watching her again,” Householder said. “This time I was counting the number of drinks she had while I was there. She had four which is normally okay for her, but I knew she had been heavily drinking before she arrived.”

In that moment, Householder’s phone buzzed with a new text message. It was from another person who needed a ride. Before leaving she asked the bartender to keep track of Laura and count her drinks.

When Householder got back, she went straight to the right side of the house to find Laura. The bartender, however, was nowhere to be found and neither was Laura.

Householder anxiously pushed through the sweaty dancing people in search of her friend. After roaming around the first floor of the house, she ran up the stairs to check the bedrooms and bathrooms. Four of the five rooms showed no sign of Laura. Householder prayed to herself she was in the fifth room.

“I got the last room checked and there was a bathroom attached to the room,” Householder remembered. “I walked into the bathroom and there she was passed out on the bathroom floor. I checked her pupils and her pulse to make sure she was still alive. Her skin was cold but I just figured it was from laying on the bathroom floor.”

After realizing she was breathing, Householder began to pick her up and lean her against the bathtub. She let water from the sink fill her cupped hands before running it down Laura’s head and face. A slight flinch came from Laura as she started to make small grunts.

Householder shook her in attempt to wake her up. Once Laura opened her eyes, Householder slung Laura’s arm around her shoulder and started to head for the door. She asked Laura questions to keep her awake, Laura gagged and vomited down her shirt before passing out

again. This time her breathing turns into shallow gasping breaths.

“I quickly set her on the ground and laid her on her side in case she puked again,” Householder said. “I watched her breathe for a few seconds and she was breathing quietly but was making a noise like she was gasping for air. I felt her wrist for a pulse and it was barely there. I tried to shake her but she wasn’t waking up, and that’s when I knew that she was in trouble because she wasn’t responding.”

Householder started panicking because she knew her friend was suffering from severe alcohol poisoning. Quickly thinking, she shakily called 911 and explained to the operator the state in which Laura was in.

According to an article published in the New York Times, 1,800 college students die every year while 600,000 are seriously injured due to alcohol related causes. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism reports roughly 20 percent of college students meet the criteria for alcohol use disorder.

Laura Samuels is one of those people. Binge drinking is written in the Google Dictionary as, “The consumption of an excessive amount of alcohol in a short amount of time.” Most people know the definition of binge drinking. In a survey done on Ashland University’s campus, out of 70 people, 95.6% of people know the definition. However, when it came to knowing common signs of alcohol poisoning, only 46.4% knew them, 39.1% knew maybe a few and 14.5% knew none at all.

“Once someone reaches the stage of vomiting, their body is saying ‘this is too much, I am going to protect you and expel this poison from your body.’ Vomiting is a protective measure,” Dana Crawford, RN/BSN nurse at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, said. “Alcohol poisoning leads to decreased respirations and dehydration, which causes increased heart rate, and low blood pressure. All leading to symptoms similar

to shock. Once vomiting starts, in conjunction with the decreased respirations, it may lead to aspiration of their own vomit, which can be fatal.”

Binge drinking is a problem that happens on college campuses across the country. According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism website, 2 out of 3 students engage in binge drinking. Binging starts to be a problem after the fourth drink and that is when the nervous and respiratory systems begin to struggle.

In the survey done, when asked how many drinks are consumed in one sitting, 53.6% said they have one to four drinks, 23.2% said they have between five and eight and 17.4% said they have nine or more. The same survey also exposed that 47.8% of those responders go out and drink on a weekly basis.

“Constant alcohol abuse and alcohol poisoning leads to lots of health issues,” Crawford said. “Alcohol encephalopathy, cirrhosis of the liver, fragile blood vessels, heart disease, vitamin deficiency, gastrointestinal bleeding, absorption problems and depression.”

Constant binge drinking can lead to some serious health problems, but it also causes academic problems as well. One in four students report academic struggles after drinking, such as missing class, falling behind, doing poorly on exams and getting low grades.

The risk of assault also rises once a large amount of alcohol is consumed. The NIH reports that 696,000 students are assaulted by another student and about 97,000 students have experienced alcohol-related sexual assault or even date rape.

“I don’t think college kids understand that being impaired leads to poor decision making,” Crawford said. “I tell every girl who is raped while intoxicated that being intoxicated doesn’t mean they deserve to be raped, but while intoxicated they aren’t as vigilant against predators, and they are more trusting with the wrong people. They get into cars with other people who

are intoxicated because they can’t judge others’ level of intoxication.”

It is estimated that 1,825 college students die from alcohol related injuries each year and even more than that are hospitalized. In the survey done on AU’s campus, 62.3% of people have said they have blacked out while 8.7% have said they have called emergency services for a friend and 2.9% have had those services called for them.

“I have witnessed hundreds of minors come in to the Emergency Department intoxicated in the 21 years that I have been a ER nurse,” Crawford said. “It seems that many 18-year-old students are away from the parental control for the first time, and take full advantage of their new found freedom.”

The amount of deaths that have affected college kids and their families are rising each year as well.

“I am not sure that kids really believe that they can die from alcohol intoxication, but I have seen it. I have listened to the cries of a father and heard the screams from a mother who stood over their son’s bed after we had unsuccessfully coded their child,” Crawford said. “I have seen at least 10-20 kids intubated because they had drank so much that they could not maintain their own airway. I have seen the effects of kids innocently drinking in college that lead to severe alcohol addiction.”

Alcoholism is a rising problem in college age students and the number of students that binge drink each week is continuously steady. Those that have been there are the advocates to their peers to stay safe because they know first hand what it has been like.

“I would not wish what I went through on anyone,” Samuels said. “What I went through has changed my life and it took me a while to be comfortable around alcohol and even longer to drink it. My advice to those who think it is okay to do that every weekend, it’s not. And it does not make you look better in anyone’s eyes. Be safe and aware of what you are doing, or things could get bad.”

Life-threatening signs of alcohol poisoning include:



Inability to wake up



Slow breathing
(fewer than 8 breaths per minute)



Seizures



Vomiting

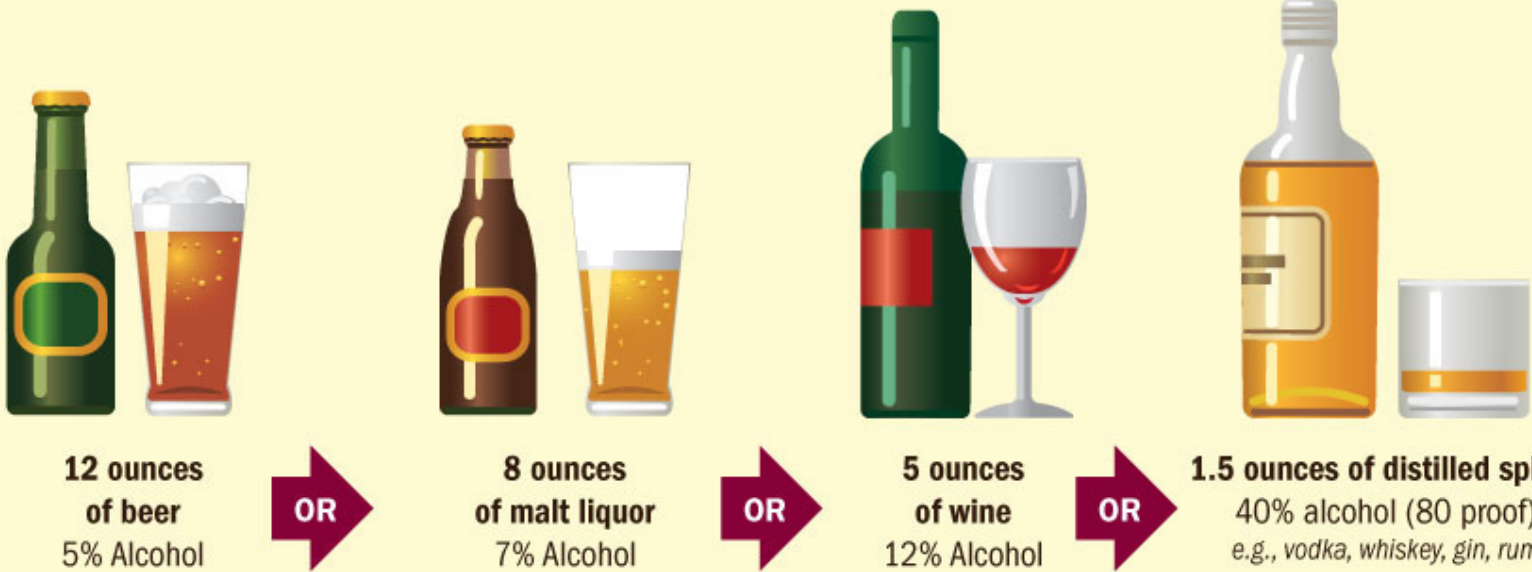


Irregular breathing
(10 seconds or more between breaths)



Hypothermia
(low body temperature),
bluish skin color, paleness

What is a “standard drink” in the US?



SOURCE: National Institute for Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL

According to the CDC, approximately 2,200 Americans die from alcohol poisoning every year. Binge drinking (drinking more than four or five drinks in a couple of hours) dramatically increases the chance of getting alcohol poisoning.

According to the student handbook, Ashland University does not permit possession, use, sale, manufacturing, or distribution of alcohol, alcohol infused food or drinks, vaporized or powdered alcohol, or “non-alcohol” beer by students, faculty, or staff on Ashland University property; except under specific guidelines for student and staff apartments as well as catering and conference services.

Individuals under the legal drinking age of 21 may not consume any alcohol on campus under any circumstances.

When alcohol and alcohol paraphernalia (i.e. beer bong, keg taps, decorative bottles, shot glasses or any other container which at a point held alcohol) are found in unauthorized areas on University property, the items will be confiscated by Ashland University officials. Also, being present in a room where alcohol and or alcohol paraphernalia are found against policy is at maximum a violation of this regulation. At minimum, presence in such a room equates to an accessory violation.