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Medical Textbooks Condone Drinking While Pregnant

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Research Summary

A review of 81 obstetrics textbooks found that the majority still condones drinking during pregnancy, even though public-health officials have promoted abstinence for two decades, HealthScout News reported July 17.

Researchers at the Virginia Commonwealth University found that only 14 of the 81 medical textbooks reviewed had consistent recommendations not to drink. In textbooks published since 1991, only 7 of the 29 consistently recommended no alcohol during pregnancy.

"I didn't expect so many recent textbooks to actually condone drinking," said Dr. Mary Nettleman, professor of medicine at Virginia Commonwealth University and lead author of the study. "All the major organizations, such as the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American Academy of Pediatrics, public-health organizations -- all advocate zero drinking during pregnancy."

Dr. Karen Filkins, an associate professor of obstetrics and gynecology at UCLA School of Medicine, said she wasn't "totally surprised" by the study's findings. "I think there is a hesitation to put something so strong like banning drinking during pregnancy in the textbook," she said.

Filkins added, "I think textbooks should discuss it the way I do. For those who have had inadvertent exposure, there is no reason to panic. However, there is no known lower level of safety. The policy and the stance should be 'no alcohol during pregnancy.' But the textbooks ought to address both the 'no-alcohol' policy and the inadvertent-alcohol situation."

Previous studies have proven that drinking alcohol during pregnancy can result in both physical and mental birth defects.

The study is published in the July 2002 issue of the [American Journal of Preventive Medicine](#).

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