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HALF OF ALL ALCOHOL AND FAST FOOD ADS AIRED DURING SPORTS: STUDY

A study of two-weeks of free to air and pay TV sports matches has revealed nearly half of all alcohol ads (49.5%) and fast food ads (46%) were aired during sports, despite the fact this viewing only made up 29 per cent of all programming.

The VicHealth and La Trobe University study examined the number of seconds viewers could clearly see alcohol, fast food and sugary beverage branding on field, as well as commercials for these products during the breaks.

The first part of the study looked at the AFL, rugby, V8 Supercars, TransTasman netball league, international cricket, Australian basketball, A-league soccer and international tennis.

A secondary in-depth analysis of 28 games during the 2012 AFL free-to-air season and the 2012/2013 international cricket season was also undertaken.

The researchers discovered that viewers were exposed to substantially more alcohol and junk food branding while the game was in play, on the players' jerseys and on-field advertisements, than ads broadcast during the break.

Lead researcher, Associate Professor Matthew Nicholson from the La Trobe University Centre for Sport and Social Impact, said they did not expect on-field branding to have as much reach as it did.

"The proportion of in-game advertising compared to in-break advertising was surprising, suggesting that alcohol and fast food companies are moving away from traditional forms of advertising," A/Prof Nicholson said.

He said that during AFL matches, viewers had 4.5 times more exposure to alcohol branding on the field than ads for alcohol during the breaks. Around 12 per cent of screen time of an AFL match, while in play, is alcohol or fast-food related. For cricket matches, this figure can rise to as high as 61 per cent.

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter said that while adults are exposed to hundreds of marketing messages every day and are mature enough to make their own decisions, evidence shows that the media, particularly TV advertising, has a strong influence on the values, attitudes and behaviour of children and young people.

"It's clear that the alcohol and fast food industries are hugely invested in sport, which ironically, should be influencing children to make positive life choices," Ms Rechter said.

"The first step to protect kids from unhealthy messages is to close the loophole that allows alcohol advertisements to air during live broadcast sports matches that appear on television during children's viewing hours.

"Long term, it would be great to see less reliance on alcohol and fast food industries. We'd like to see sporting codes taking the initiative to become less closely linked to these products."

A/Prof Nicholson added that more research was needed to ascertain the influence in-game advertising has on young people and children.

Download the *Alcohol and junk food advertising and promotion through sport* fact sheet at www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/alcohol-junk-food-sport-advertising

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