Dear Students,
The article below from a newsletter that I receive discusses brain scan research on the effects of alcohol on the brain. You might want to read this for yourself as well as your patients.
I am including a link for e-CHUG an evidence based dynamic, on-line alcohol intervention and personalized feedback tool developed by counselors at San Diego State University. If you or others think that you need to reduce your alcohol consumption this might be a helpful tool that IUPUI is contracted to use. If you need help with alcohol consumption please don't delay in getting the help you need. The stress and strain of your profession can take a heavy toll and substance abuse can lead to further deterioration of your health and life. Healthy self-care is essential to maintaining a happy personal and professional life.

http://www.life.iupui.edu/caps/echug.html

Best regards,
Suzanne

"Brain in the News" is a weekly commentary on how brain science relates to the news. The brain is involved in everything we do. Wherever there are human stories the brain is involved. From the impact of war and natural disasters on the brain to drug abuse scandals to courtroom dramas to politics the brain is in the news, and you can read about it here.

Alcohol is Not a Health Food

CNN recently reported on a new study that confirms what I have seen on SPECT scans for a long time – alcohol is not a health food! Any amount of alcohol can decrease brain size. I like to say when it comes to the brain, size matters. People who drink alcohol – even the moderate amounts that help prevent heart disease – have a smaller brain volume than those who do not, according to a study in the Archives of Neurology.

While a certain amount of brain shrinkage is normal with age, greater amounts in some parts of the brain have been linked to dementia. &quot;Decline in brain volume – estimated at 2 percent per decade – is a natural part of aging,&quot; says Carol Ann Paul, who conducted the study when she was at the Boston University School of Public Health. She had hoped to find that alcohol might protect against such brain shrinkage. &quot;However, we did not find the protective effect,&quot; says Paul, who is now an instructor in the neuroscience program at Wellesley College. &quot;In fact, any level of alcohol consumption resulted in a decline in brain volume.&quot;
In the study, Paul and colleagues looked at 1,839 healthy people with an average age of about 61. The patients underwent magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) of the brain and reported how much they tippled. Overall, the more alcohol consumed, the smaller the brain volume, with abstainers having a higher brain volume than former drinkers, light drinkers (one to seven drinks per week), moderate drinkers (eight to 14 drinks per week), and heavy drinkers (14 or more drinks per week). Men were more likely to be heavy drinkers than women. But the link between brain volume and alcohol wasn’t as strong in men. For men, only those who were heavy drinkers had a smaller brain volume than those who consumed little or no alcohol.

In women, even moderate drinkers had a smaller brain volume than abstainers or former drinkers. It’s not clear why even modest amounts of alcohol may shrink the brain, although alcohol is “known to dehydrate tissues, and constant dehydration can have negative effects on any sensitive tissue,” says Paul. “We always knew that alcohol at higher dosages results in shrinking of the brain and cognitive deficit,” says Dr. Petros Levounis, M.D., director of the Addiction Institute of New York at St. Luke’s — Roosevelt Hospital Center, who was not involved in the study. “What is new with this article is that it shows brain shrinking at lower doses of alcohol.”

Less is better.

To your brain health,

Daniel

Daniel Amen, M.D.
CEO, Amen Clinics, Inc.
Distinguished Fellow, American Psychiatric Association

Dr. Amen’s Blog – Recent Articles

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The Learning Brain Expo
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Newport Beach Marriott Hotel, Newport Beach, CA
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January 25, 2009
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(IITAP) International Institute for Trauma and Addiction Professionals Symposium
February 19, 2009 - February 21, 2009
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California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists
April 30, 2009 - May 03, 2009
The Fairmont Hotel, San Jose, CA
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ADD Resources November Conference
Date: November 1, 2008

Keynote speaker: William Dodson, MD

Location: Smith Hall - University of Washington - Seattle Campus

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CLINIC LOCATIONS

Amen Clinic Newport Beach
4019 Westerly Place, Suite 100
Newport Beach, CA 92660
(949) 266-3700

Amen Clinic Fairfield
350 Chadborne Road
Fairfield, CA 94585
(707) 429-7181

Amen Clinic Northwest
3315 S. 23rd Street, Suite 102
Tacoma, WA 98405
(253) 779-HOPE

Amen Clinic DC
1875 Campus Commons Drive
Reston, VA 20191
(703) 860-5600