

ICPSYCH
Press Statement 16th September 2008

**Irish College of Psychiatrists call for Ban on
Alcohol Advertising and Sponsorship in Ireland**

The Irish College of Psychiatrists today (16th September) published a Policy Paper, which calls for a ban on all alcohol advertising and sponsorship in Ireland. The Policy Paper states that: **“It is the opinion of the Irish College of Psychiatrists, that particularly given the evidence of adolescent alcohol related harm, that the Republic of Ireland should ban all promotion (advertising and sponsorship included) on alcohol products”**.

Consultant Psychiatrist and lead author of the paper, Dr. Bobby Smyth said today, **“Alcohol consumption has risen by about 40% in Ireland in the past 15 years and in that time the health consequences have increased significantly. Evidence shows that alcohol is responsible for 1500 deaths in this country each year and the negative impact of excessive alcohol use by young people and adults in this country is virtually immense.”**

A recent report by the Office of Tobacco Control (2006) revealed that our 16-17 year olds spend €20·09 per week on alcohol. This amounts to an illegal alcohol market of €145m in this country – and as a society we seem to be accepting this as ‘normal’.

An international ESPAD survey (2004) of 15-16 year olds shows that Irish school children demonstrate the highest rates of drunkenness in Europe. When we consider the emerging scientific evidence of the harm which alcohol can do to the developing teenage brain, these rates of drunkenness should cause great alarm, however, we have little meaningful action by our authorities.

Dr. Bobby Smyth went on to say, **“the laissez-fair approach taken in our self regulatory environment on alcohol advertising is not working. Virtually all our main sports are linked to alcohol products. We have no meaningful restrictions on advertising in print or electronic media – and all that has happened in recent years is the creation of an illusion that something is being done. Nothing is being done and a myriad of statistics on sales and outcomes bears this out”**.

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