

## COGNITIVE ORIGINS OF ALCOHOL USE

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### **Introduction and Aims:**

Despite ample evidence on risky drinking in adolescence and beyond, little is known about cognitive precursors early in life. The aim is to reveal what young children know about alcohol-specific norms (what kind of adult drink what kind of alcoholic beverage in what kind of situation) and alcohol expectancies (the emotional changes that are likely to occur when adults drink).

### **Design and Methods:**

Pre-schoolers aged three to six participated in the electronic Appropriate Beverage Task and the Berkeley Puppet Interview. Their parents completed a questionnaire.

### **Key Findings:**

More than two thirds of the children correctly classified beer, white/red wine and champagne as alcoholic beverages, while about half knew the drinks by name. Alcoholic beverages were assigned frequently to men and to adults at a party. The greater parental drinking was, the more their children knew about the names of alcoholic beverages and the consumption norms. Like those of adolescents, children's alcohol expectancies could be classified according to the valence (positive/negative) and activation (arousal/sedation) of expected emotional change. Among sons but not daughters, the greater parental drinking was, the higher negative and the lower positive alcohol expectancies were.

### **Discussion and Conclusions:**

Various studies have demonstrated that alcohol-related cognitions are crucial predictors of early alcohol initiation and subsequent risky drinking. The presented evidence indicates that alcohol use is rooted in early childhood and is already at that time associated with parental drinking. The implementation of policy and prevention approaches aiming at minimising children's exposure to alcohol use is needed.

### **Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

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