

Commentary

How gross methodological errors influence study results: Éduc'alcool response to Peake *et al.*: 'Analysis of the accuracy and completeness of cardiovascular health information on alcohol industry-funded websites'

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Petticrew's research team strikes again¹: cherry-picking information and trying to pass it as a valid scientific method.

For starters, the authors clearly did not follow through with what their methods section claims. Their article reads 'Where a website had multiple (>3) webpages with a health information basis, the most relevant page(s) was used for the analysis (based on CVD focus and publication date)' (page 2). Despite Éduc'alcool's website having a webpage and a publication entirely dedicated to heart health,² the authors chose to use a webpage with an older publication date and addressing a wider range of topics (i.e. 'The effects of moderate, regular alcohol consumption').

This omission of evident information can only be due to one of two reasons: either the authors voluntarily chose to misrepresent their results, or they failed to adequately follow through with their methodology. No matter the reason, they should publish an erratum correcting such gross mistakes. To help the authors, we direct them to our 'Alcohol and Heart Health' publication,² from which table 1 has been extracted.

Finally, to also help authors correct the mistakes evident in their article's second table, we are also generously providing them a table to illustrate what their data on Éduc'alcool should look like (see Supplementary table S1). Hence, Éduc'alcool's profile would more closely resemble data extracted from non-industry-funded websites. More so, it also becomes evident that Éduc'alcool provides the most complete information, compared to all organizations analyzed (industry and non-industry funded), spanning the greatest number of diseases. Even more importantly, Éduc'alcool remains true to itself by providing a healthy level of unbiased information, without demonizing nor trivializing alcohol. Unfortunately, recognizing this strength in Éduc'alcool would go against the authors' propaganda, as evidenced by their previous publications^{3,4} that have also misrepresented Éduc'alcool's published data on alcohol and health.^{5,6}

Last but not least, the authors can repeat as much—and as often—as they please that Éduc'alcool is an alcohol industry-funded organization, they will not change the truth: Éduc'alcool is

Table 1 A summary of the alcohol levels at which point protective or harmful effects on various cardiovascular health indicators are observed among drinkers, compared to lifetime abstainers

Risk	Protective effect (in number of drinks)	Harmful effect (in number of drinks)
Incident coronary heart disease	<4.4	–
Heart failure	Among women: <1	No indication, compared to abstainers, but the more you drink, the more dangerous it is.
Death due to a heart disease	<4.4	No indication, compared to abstainers, but the more you drink, the more dangerous it is.
Stroke (CVA)	<1.1	>4.5
Hemorrhagic stroke	–	>2.2
Ischemic stroke	Among women: <3.7	>3.7
Death following a stroke	<1.1	–
Atrial fibrillation	–	>0
Hypertensive cardiac disease	–	In general: >1.5 Among women: >1.5 Among men: >0
Ischemic cardiomyopathy	<5.2	>5.2

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funded by a levy taken by the State-owned Quebec monopoly on the sales of alcohol.

Supplementary data

[Supplementary data](#) are available at *EURPUB* online.

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Conflicts of interest: Éduc'alcool is funded by a levy on the alcoholic beverages sold through the network of the SAQ (Société des alcools du Québec), the state-owned alcohol Crown Corporation. This represents more than 99.9% of the organization's funding. Éduc'alcool also receives about three thousand Canadian dollars per year (0.1% of its funding) from small local alcohol producers who do not sell their products through the SAQ and must fund a prevention organization of their choice according to Quebec laws. H.S. is the director general of Éduc'alcool.

References

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- 2 Éduc'alcool. Alcohol and Heart Health [Internet]. Éduc'alcool. 2019. <https://www.educalcohol.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Alcohol-and-heart-health.pdf> (27 September 2021, date last accessed).
- 3 Petticrew M, Maani Hessari N, Knai C, Weiderpass E. How alcohol industry organisations mislead the public about alcohol and cancer. *Drug Alcohol Rev* 2018;37: 293–303.
- 4 Lim AWY, Van Schalkwyk MCI, Maani Hessari N, Petticrew MP. Pregnancy, fertility, breastfeeding, and alcohol consumption: an analysis of framing and completeness of information disseminated by alcohol industry-funded organizations. *J Stud Alcohol Drugs* 2019;80:524–33.
- 5 Sacy H. Another example of misleading practices and erroneous information: Éduc'alcool Response to Lim et al. (2019): "Pregnancy, fertility, breastfeeding, and alcohol consumption: an analysis of framing and completeness of information disseminated by alcohol industry-funded organizations". *J Stud Alcohol Drugs* 2020;81:384–5.
- 6 Nadeau L, Sacy H. Educ'alcool response to Petticrew et al.: 'How alcohol industry organisations mislead the public about alcohol and cancer'. *Drug Alcohol Rev* 2018; 37:307.