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Drink beer to lose weight? Muscle-up with a vodka tonic? Latest Deceptive and Dangerous Marketing Trend by Big Alcohol

New Report Asks, Are Alcohol Companies Making Illegal Health Claims?

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (June 28, 2011) – Marin Institute, the alcohol industry watchdog, released a new study today: ***Questionable Health Claims by Alcohol Companies: From Protein Vodka to Weight-Loss Beer***. The report analyzes Big Alcohol's latest marketing scheme to jump on the healthy product bandwagon made popular by the food industry. But, the report concludes, when it comes to alcoholic beverages, such marketing messages are *"legally tenuous, morally unsound, and potentially dangerous."*

"The wine industry has been exaggerating wine's health benefits for years. Now Big Alcohol is taking such messages to a whole new level," said Marin Institute's Research and Policy Director Michele Simon, JD, MPH and coauthor of the report. *"Major alcohol companies are exploiting ineffective or non-existent regulatory oversight with deceptive marketing and potentially dangerous products."*

Alcohol brands spotlighted in the report include *Devotion Vodka ("Infused with Casein")*, *Fragoli* strawberry liqueur (*promoted with antioxidants*), *Absolut*, *Skyy*, and *Finlandia* vodkas (*"infused with natural flavors"*), *Michelob Ultra*, and *MGD 64* beer (promoted as fitness and weight-loss aids). Ad campaigns for these products included claims that defy science and common sense. Using terms like "vitamin B enhanced," "antioxidant nutrients," and "all-natural," combined with images of fruit or young athletes running or cycling, these products are promoted as logical compliments to a healthy, fitness-oriented lifestyle, without a hint of irony.

"Alcohol is not a health and wellness product," added Simon. *"Even moderate consumption is responsible for a wide range of health problems, including heart disease and various cancers, not to mention an epidemic of underage drinking. Alcohol is not a health tonic; it can cause life-long suffering and destroy families. Where are those messages?"*

Given the blatant lack of industry oversight from a failed voluntary self-regulatory system, today Marin Institute is sending a copy of the report to the U.S. Federal Trade Commission to demand increased oversight and legal action to stop these obviously deceptive marketing claims.

Janna Brancolini, the report's co-author, notes the companies seemed to have something to hide: *"Most companies I identified in my research declined my requests for interviews to explain their marketing practices."* Since the research was completed, Lotus Vodka has gone out of business, while Devotion Vodka now has a legal disclaimer on their website. Devotion Vodka has also apparently blocked author Michele Simon from following the company on Twitter.

READ THE ENTIRE REPORT HERE: www.marininstitute.org