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*Editor's Note: The following research will be released at the Society for Prevention Research ([www.preventionresearch.org](http://www.preventionresearch.org)) annual meeting, May 31-June 2, 2006, Hyatt Regency, San Antonio, TX.*

## **CRIME AND CRASHES IN THE NEWS: THE ROLE OF ALCOHOL AND DRUGS** *Researchers question role of media in public understanding*

Alcohol and drug abuse are major factors in both violent crime and automobile crashes. Fatality statistics show that 34 percent of fatal car crashes involve alcohol, and intoxication is a factor in over 30 percent of homicides. Many of these incidents show up in the news, but the role of substance abuse is not always made clear.

- **Does news coverage accurately portray the role of drugs and alcohol in crashes and crime?**
- **How do the news media frame stories that involve the consequences of drug and alcohol abuse?**
- **Could improved news coverage of these incidents help Americans better understand the risks and consequences of drug and alcohol abuse?**

In this poster presentation at the Society for Prevention Research Annual Meeting, researchers from Ohio State University and Colorado State University will describe a two-year comprehensive survey of coverage of automobile crashes and crime in local and national television news, newspapers, and national magazines, supported by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. The authors will also discuss the characteristic frames employed by journalists in covering these stories, the substantial under-reporting of the role of alcohol in violent crime and unintended injuries, and the implications for media advocacy.

Previous research has found that media campaigns and news coverage have a positive role to play in educating people about health risks and changing behavior. For example, a recent review found that effective media campaigns against drinking and driving reduced drunk-driving related crashes by six to 14 percent.

The SPR Annual Meeting brings together scientists, practitioners, advocates and policy makers working to prevent social, physical, and mental health problems. The meeting is being held May 31<sup>st</sup> through June 2<sup>nd</sup> in San Antonio Texas at the Hyatt Regency Hotel at 123 Losoya Street.

*Sources: Michael Slater, Ph.D., Ohio State University; Marilee Long, Ph.D., Valerie Ford, Ph.D., Colorado State University*