Study: Alcohol Named the Most Lethal Drug

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The most lethal drug isn't heroin or crack cocaine; it isn't meth or marijuana. The substance that holds this dubious title is, in fact, legal and very common—it's alcohol, according to a new study published in the journal *Lancet* and reported by The Associated Press.

For the study, British researchers reviewed a list of drugs including alcohol, cocaine, heroin, ecstasy, marijuana and LSD. Scientists analyzed how addictive the drugs were and how much harm they caused to the human body.

Researchers also examined the drugs' harmful affects on both individuals and society as a whole—for example, by tearing apart families and increasing health care, social services and prison costs.

In general, researchers found that alcohol was deadlier than heroin and crack cocaine when considering its easy availability compared with the "hard" drugs.

"Just think about what happens [with alcohol] at every football game," said Wim van den Brink, a professor of psychiatry and addiction at the University of Amsterdam who was not connected to the study but who coauthored a commentary in the Lancet.

Alcohol is connected to higher death rates, is linked to more crimes than most drugs and, when abused, can damage nearly all organ systems.

Because of the harm alcohol can cause, experts suggested that countries should expand education and prevention efforts, raise the price of alcohol and rethink how they classify drugs.

"What governments decide is illegal is not always based on science," van den Brink said. "Drugs that are legal cause at least as much damage, if not more, than drugs that are illicit."

While excessive drinking can have negative health effects, studies show moderate drinking may help fight breast cancer, colon cancer, even Alzheimer's disease. Click here to learn more.

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