

## Robert Brewer

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**From:** Robert Brewer  
**Sent:** Saturday, 23 July 2016 3:32 p.m.  
**To:** Spiritsnz Admin  
**Subject:** Response to Jennie Connor Study on Alcohol and Cancer

**For immediate use**

### Alcohol And Cancer

A just released opinion piece by Otago University's Prof. Jennie Connor would have us believe drinking causes cancer. This is not supported by credible research and hides or simplifies the complex relationship between the development of cancer in some people and the factors that can cause these cancers.

"It's a little like saying that if a study finds people who wear blue jeans drive too fast you conclude that blue jeans must cause road fatalities," said Spirits New Zealand Chief Executive, Robert Brewer.

"There is no doubt that heavy drinking over time is associated with a range of health issues including some cancers in some people. However moderate drinking, as part of a normal healthy lifestyle, has been shown to have beneficial health impacts – in fact repeated international studies find that those who drink moderately live longer than those who do not drink at all," said Brewer.

Senior Vice President of Scientific Affairs at the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States, Dr Sam Zakhari, says such studies do not accurately reflect current research.

"To declare that alcohol definitively causes cancer based upon cherry-picked epidemiology articles lacks scientific credibility.

"Based on my own 40-year career as a biomedical scientist, including 26 years at the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, the science regarding cancer and alcohol consumption is far from settled. In fact, the existing epidemiological studies do not demonstrate causation, nor do they account for the multitude of confounding factors," said Dr Zakhari.

The complex interactions of lifestyle, socio-cultural and genetic issues that can cause cancer is highlighted when studies which control for smoking show light to moderate drinking is not significantly associated with an increased risk for total cancer in men and women.

Brewer says that in the end people must make up their own mind regarding their drinking habits and the impact that might be having on their lives and the lives of those around them.

"Official figures show that the harm caused by drinking in New Zealand is coming down – particularly among younger drinkers. That doesn't mean we can't do better however so the message probably is – enjoy life, eat well, exercise a bit and, if you choose to drink, drink moderately and responsibly."

ENDS

Editors' Note:

Dr. Sam Zakhari is a biomedical scientist with over 40 years of research experience -- including 26 years with NIAAA -- in the fields of pharmacology, toxicology, biochemistry, pharmaceutical chemistry, physiology and molecular biology. He is the author of over 70 scientific articles and editor of 11 monographs on the subject of alcohol and health. A press statement announcing his appointment to DISCUS in 2012 can be found at <http://www.discus.org/top-us-alcohol-researcher-joins-discus-to-head-industry%E2%80%99s-scientific-affairs-office/>



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