Study says alcohol more harmful than marijuana

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24th March, 2007
Study says alcohol more harmful than marijuana

A major new study into drugs, published in the British medical journal \textit{The Lancet}, has concluded that alcohol and tobacco are more dangerous than many highly illegal drugs. They are listed in the top 10 most dangerous substances in the study. Researchers believe British law should classify alcohol and tobacco the same as hard drugs such as heroin and cocaine. Head researcher Professor David Nutt of Britain's Bristol University suggested a new classification of harmful substances. He said it needed to be based on the actual risks posed to society. Professor Nutt said the new system was necessary in Britain as the existing one was out of date: "The current drug system is ill thought-out and arbitrary," he said. He added there was no scientific basis for excluding alcohol and tobacco as serious drugs.

Professor Nutt and his colleagues used three factors to find out how harmful a drug is: the physical harm to the user, how addictive the drug is, and the impact it has on society. The researchers were experts in drug addiction, lawyers and police officers with scientific or medical backgrounds and doctors. All of them agreed on the dangers of alcohol and tobacco. They ranked alcohol as the fifth and tobacco as the ninth most harmful drugs. Heroin and cocaine finished top, while marijuana was eleventh and Ecstasy finished last in the list of 20 drugs. The latter two are illegal in Britain and America, while alcohol and tobacco are legal. Tobacco causes 40 percent of all hospital illnesses, while alcohol is blamed for more than half of all visits to hospital emergency rooms. They also harm society in other ways. They damage families and stretch police services.
WARM-UPS

1. ADDICTION: Choose (imagine) one thing you are addicted to – It could be chocolate, love, English grammar, jogging, etc. Walk around the class and talk to other students to find out their addictions. Which ones do you share?

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

   drugs / alcohol / tobacco / researchers / heroin / cocaine / risks to society / colleagues / physical harm / addiction / hospital emergency rooms / police

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

3. WORLD RIVERS: With your partner(s), talk about these drugs. What is your image of them? What do you know of them? Change partners and share your findings.

   • alcohol
   • tobacco
   • ecstasy
   • marijuana

   • heroin
   • caffeine
   • cocaine
   • other ______________

4. ALCOHOL OPINIONS: Talk about each of these opinions. Do you think they are true for your country / other countries?

   • alcohol is an important part of our culture
   • alcohol causes too many road accidents and domestic violence
   • marijuana is a lot more harmful than alcohol
   • society would function better without alcohol and tobacco
   • alcohol is for people who cannot enjoy themselves unaided
   • alcohol should be made illegal
   • society would never accept alcohol and tobacco being illegal
   • people would live longer without alcohol and tobacco

5. QUICK DEBATE: Have this fun quick debate with your partner(s). Students A think alcohol should be classed as a harmful drug; students B think alcohol is not harmful and should remain legal. Change partners and topics every two minutes.

6. DRUGS: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with drugs. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article’s headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

   a. A study reports alcohol is more dangerous than many illegal drugs. T / F
   b. The report said alcohol should be in the same category as heroin. T / F
   c. A professor praised Britain’s up-to-date drug classification. T / F
   d. Many scientific facts show alcohol is not a serious drug. T / F
   e. The research considered the harm a drug does to society. T / F
   f. Some of the researchers were drug addicts hooked on heroin. T / F
   g. The research says alcohol is more harmful than marijuana. T / F
   h. Alcohol is behind 40 % of all visits to hospital emergency rooms. T / F

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

   a. major group
   b. highly drain
   c. classify illogical
   d. arbitrary specialists
   e. basis important
   f. factors last-mentioned
   g. impact aspects
   h. experts grounds
   i. latter effect
   j. stretch very

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

   a. A major new study out and arbitrary
   b. classify alcohol and tobacco on the dangers of alcohol
   c. based on the actual risks the user
   d. The current drug system is ill thought-the same as hard drugs
   e. there was no scientific basis for it has on society
   f. the physical harm to into drugs
   g. the impact stretch police services
   h. All of them agreed excluding alcohol
   i. The latter posed to society
   j. They damage families and two are illegal in Britain
WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Study says alcohol more harmful than marijuana

A major new study into drugs, **published** in the British medical journal The Lancet, has **suggested** that alcohol and tobacco are more dangerous than many highly illegal drugs. They are **listed** in the top 10 most dangerous substances in the study. Researchers believe British law should classify alcohol and tobacco the same as hard drugs such as heroin and cocaine. Head researcher Professor David Nutt of Britain's Bristol University **posed** a new classification of harmful substances. He said it **based** to be **needed** on the actual risks **imposed** to society. Professor Nutt said the new system was necessary in Britain as the existing one was out of date: "The current drug system is ill thought-out and arbitrary," he said. He **concluded** there was no scientific basis for excluding alcohol and tobacco as serious drugs.

Professor Nutt and his colleagues used three **factors** to find out how harmful a drug is: the physical harm to the user, how addictive the drug is, and the **impact** it has on society. The researchers were experts in drug addiction, lawyers and police officers with **scientific** or medical backgrounds and doctors. All of them **agreed** on the dangers of alcohol and tobacco. They ranked alcohol as the fifth and tobacco as the ninth most harmful drugs. Heroin and cocaine **finished** top, while marijuana was eleventh and Ecstasy finished last in the list of 20 drugs. The latter two are illegal in Britain and America, while alcohol and tobacco are **legal**. Tobacco causes 40 percent of all hospital illnesses, while alcohol is **blamed** for more than half of all visits to hospital emergency rooms. They also harm society in other ways. They damage families and **stretched** police services.
LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Study says alcohol more harmful than marijuana

A major new ________________, published in the British medical journal The Lancet, ________________ alcohol and tobacco are more dangerous than many highly illegal drugs. They are ________________ 10 most dangerous substances in the study. Researchers believe British law should classify alcohol and tobacco the same ________________ heroin and cocaine. Head researcher Professor David Nutt of Britain's Bristol University suggested a new classification of harmful substances. He said it ________________ actual risks posed to society. Professor Nutt said the new system was necessary in Britain as the existing one was out of date: "The current drug system ________________ arbitrary," he said. He added there was ________________ excluding alcohol and tobacco as serious drugs.

Professor Nutt and his colleagues used three factors ________________ harmful a drug is: the physical harm to the user, how addictive the drug is, and the impact ________________. The researchers were experts in drug addiction, lawyers and police officers with scientific or medical backgrounds and doctors. ________________ the dangers of alcohol and tobacco. They ranked alcohol as the fifth and tobacco as the ninth most harmful drugs. Heroin and cocaine finished top, while marijuana was eleventh and Ecstasy finished ________________ 20 drugs. The latter two are illegal in Britain and America, while alcohol and tobacco are legal. Tobacco causes 40 percent of all hospital illnesses, while alcohol is ________________ half of all visits to hospital emergency rooms. They also harm society ________________. They damage families and stretch police services.
AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words ‘hard’ and ‘drug’.
   • Share your findings with your partners.
   • Make questions using the words you found.
   • Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.
   • Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
   • Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT “DRUGS” SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about drugs, alcohol, tobacco and society.
   • Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
   • Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
   • Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>major</th>
<th>physical</th>
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<tr>
<td>highly</td>
<td>experts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>classify</td>
<td>agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>new</td>
<td>last</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>out of date</td>
<td>40 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>basis</td>
<td>stretch</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DISCUSSION

STUDENT A’s QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

a) What did you think when you read the headline?
b) Do you think alcohol is harmful?
c) Do you agree with the report that alcohol is more harmful than drugs like marijuana?
d) Would your life change if tobacco and alcohol were illegal?
e) In what ways is alcohol harmful to society?
f) Do you think alcohol and tobacco are real drugs?
g) Do you agree alcohol is OK because it is an important part of some country’s cultures?
h) If scientific research says alcohol is very harmful, should governments act and ban it?
i) Why do you think it has taken so long for a study to say alcohol is as harmful as many hard drugs?
j) Would life in your country without alcohol and tobacco?

---------------------------------------------------------------------

STUDENT B’s QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

a) Did you like reading this article?
b) Do you think all addictive drugs (including caffeine) should be banned?
c) Are you surprised by any of the rankings in the study?
d) Do you think governments should now make marijuana legal?
e) What is your opinion of people who drink too much alcohol?
f) What is your opinion of people who smoke marijuana?
g) Do you think hospital patients should pay higher fees if they drink alcohol or smoke cigarettes?
h) Would your government be popular if it banned alcohol and tobacco?
i) Should alcohol and tobacco be banned or more heavily taxed?
j) Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

a) What was the most interesting thing you heard?
b) Was there a question you didn’t like?
c) Was there something you totally disagreed with?
d) What did you like talking about?
e) Which was the most difficult question?
SPEAKING

ROLE PLAY:
A discussion about drugs and society.
Team up with classmates who have the same role as you. Develop your roles and discuss ideas and “strategies” before the role play begins. Introduce yourself to the other role players. Discuss your roles after the role play ends.

Role A – Professor Nutt
You are sure that many governments wrongly think alcohol and tobacco are harmless. Your study shows they do a lot of harm to society. You believe they cause more harm than many drugs that are already illegal. You want alcohol and tobacco made illegal.
- Think of more reasons why alcohol and tobacco should be illegal.

Role B – Smoker and drinker
You think tobacco and alcohol are normal parts of your culture. People have been smoking and drinking for thousands of years. It is your right to drink. You enjoy it. Alcohol has never harmed your family, health or life.
- Think of more reasons why Professor Nutt is wrong.

Role C – Addicted smoker and alcoholic
Cigarettes and alcohol have ruined your life. You are in very poor health. Your family life is in ruins because you cannot stop drinking. You lost many jobs because of hangovers. You are angry with tobacco and alcohol companies for glamorizing cigarettes and alcohol.
- Think of more reasons why alcohol and tobacco should be illegal.

Role D – Doctor
You have seen hundreds of tragic traffic accidents where drivers have been drunk. You think alcohol is OK but governments should be stricter. You believe there should be very heavy punishments for any crime committed when a person is drunk.
- Think of more reasons why the government should be stricter.

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A major new study (1) **into** drugs, published in the British medical journal The Lancet, has concluded that alcohol and tobacco are more dangerous than many (2) **unti** illegal drugs. They are listed in the top 10 most dangerous substances in the study. Researchers believe British law should (3) **classify** alcohol and tobacco the same as hard drugs (4) **as** heroin and cocaine. Head researcher Professor David Nutt of Britain's Bristol University suggested a new classification of harmful substances. He said it needed to be based on the actual risks (5) **to** society. Professor Nutt said the new system was necessary in Britain as the existing one was out of date: "The current drug system is (6) **out** thought-out and arbitrary," he said. He added there was no scientific basis for excluding alcohol and tobacco as serious drugs.

Professor Nutt and his colleagues used three factors to find out how harmful a drug is: the physical harm (7) **to** the user, how addictive the drug is, and the impact it has on society. The researchers were experts (8) **on** drug addiction, lawyers and police officers with scientific or medical backgrounds and doctors. All of them agreed (9) **on** the dangers of alcohol and tobacco. They ranked alcohol as the fifth and tobacco as the ninth most harmful drugs. Heroin and cocaine finished top, while marijuana was eleventh and Ecstasy finished (10) **last** in the list of 20 drugs. The latter two are illegal in Britain and America, while alcohol and tobacco are legal. Tobacco causes 40 percent of all hospital illnesses, (11) **whatever** alcohol is blamed (12) **while** more than half of all visits to hospital emergency rooms. They also harm society in other ways. They damage families and stretch police services.
HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google’s search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information about the effects of alcohol on society. What are the laws in different countries? Talk about what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. DRUGS POSTER: Make a poster about different kinds of drugs and the harm they do to our bodies, lives and societies. Include drugs we do not normally think are dangerous. Show your poster to your class in the next lesson. Vote on the best one(s).

4. MAGAZINE ARTICLE: Write a magazine article about the effects of alcohol and tobacco on your society. Discuss what society would be like with and without these two drugs. Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Which article was best and why?

5. LETTER: Write a letter to the leader of your country. Tell him/her what he/she has to do to make sure alcohol and tobacco do not harm your society. Ask him/her three questions. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

Study says alcohol more harmful than marijuana – 24th March, 2007

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:


SYNONYM MATCH:

a. major important
b. highly very
c. classify group
d. arbitrary illogical
e. basis grounds
f. factors aspects
g. impact effect
h. experts specialists
i. latter last-mentioned
j. stretch drain

PHRASE MATCH:

a. A major new study published in the British medical journal The Lancet, has concluded that alcohol and tobacco are more dangerous than many highly illegal drugs. They are listed in the top 10 most dangerous substances in the study. Researchers believe British law should classify alcohol and tobacco the same as hard drugs such as heroin and cocaine. Head researcher Professor David Nutt of Britain's Bristol University suggested a new classification of harmful substances. He said it needed to be based on the actual risks posed to society. Professor Nutt said the new system was necessary in Britain as the existing one was out of date: "The current drug system is ill thought-out and arbitrary," he said. He added there was no scientific basis for excluding alcohol and tobacco as serious drugs.

b. classify alcohol and tobacco the same as hard drugs

c. based on the actual risks posed to society

d. The current drug system is ill thought-out and arbitrary

e. there was no scientific basis for excluding alcohol

f. the physical harm to the user

g. the impact it has on society

h. All of them agreed on the dangers of alcohol and tobacco. They ranked alcohol as the fifth and tobacco as the ninth most harmful drugs. Heroin and cocaine finished top, while marijuana was eleventh and Ecstasy finished last in the list of 20 drugs. The latter two are illegal in Britain and America, while alcohol and tobacco are legal. Tobacco causes 40 percent of all hospital illnesses, while alcohol is blamed for more than half of all visits to hospital emergency rooms. They also harm society in other ways. They damage families and stretch police services.

i. The latter two are illegal in Britain and America, while alcohol and tobacco are legal. Tobacco causes 40 percent of all hospital illnesses, while alcohol is blamed for more than half of all visits to hospital emergency rooms. They also harm society in other ways. They damage families and stretch police services.

j. They damage families and stretch police services

GAP FILL:

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LANGUAGE WORK

1 - c  2 - a  3 - d  4 - b  5 - c  6 - c  7 - b  8 - a  9 - a  10 - b  11 - d  12 - b

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