

Drinking: It's a \$61 billion hangover

The facts are staggering.
One drinker in 10 is an alcoholic.
Half of all traffic fatalities involve alcohol.

Nearly two-thirds of all murders involve alcohol.

On top of that, statistics prepared by the National Council on Alcoholism (NCA) note that between 6-10 percent of all employees are alcoholics. That costs consumers and employers nearly \$61 billion annually in absenteeism, health and welfare services, property damage and medical expenses.

In Michigan, alcohol abuse and alcoholism combined are ranked as the fourth highest cause of death. The biggest cause of alcohol-related death is cirrhosis of the liver, or extensive scarring of the liver. The disease is irreversible.

In Wayne County the incidence of death from cirrhosis of the liver is 27.6

per 100,000, or nearly twice the national average of 14.3. In Oakland County the figure on cirrhosis deaths is 9.5 per 100,000.

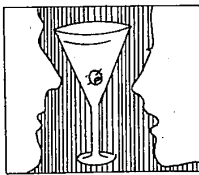
THE PROBLEMS of alcohol affect

everyone. There is no "typical alcoholic" and the stereotype of the Skid Row bum is not valid. The NCA says that less than 3 percent of the people with alcoholism are found on Skid Row.

And there is no "typical drinker." NCA surveys estimate 95 percent of those over 13 have had a drink at some time in their life. Proportionately, drinkers between 18 and 21 drink more than other age groups, despite the fact that the legal drinking age is 21.

What is being done about alcoholism? Not enough, according to people involved in the treatment of alcoholics.

Nationally, the money available in the 1981 federal budget for alcohol re-



habilitation programs is \$11 million, or 6.8 percent less than in 1980. And the prospect for funds in 1982 is less promising.

According to Ken Corbett of the Michigan Department of Health's Office of Substance Abuse, federal funding for alcohol and other social service programs face up to a 25 percent cut in 1995.

Proponents of alcohol abuse programs also complain of the disproportionate amount of public money spent on drug abuse when compared with alcohol abuse programs.

In the 1979-80 fiscal year, it cost \$15 million to treat 21,000 drug abuse "clients" in the state. State and federally supported alcohol treatment programs saw 62,000 "clients" at a cost of \$12.6 million. The funding for each drug "client" was about \$700 while the funding for each alcohol "client" was close to \$200.

And the funding for government-supported alcohol treatment programs is not likely to improve, according to OSA's Dick Calkins. The OSA, which funds both drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs, will have about \$33 million to give out this year, nearly 11 percent less than last year's \$37 million. Meanwhile the number of people seeking help for alcohol and drug abuse problems has increased by 12 percent this year.

The increased case load and the reduction in funds have put people on waiting lists for treatment, says Calkins.

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