

# The Effectiveness of Alcohol Warning Labels: A Review and Extension

[J. CRAIG ANDREWS](#)  
Marquette University

## Abstract

Since the appearance of the federally mandated alcohol warning labels in 1989, there have been numerous research studies examining the effectiveness of the warnings. Such studies have explored awareness levels, risk perceptions, believability, attitudes, and behavioral changes associated with the alcohol warning labels. Unfortunately, although frequent and heavier drinkers are aware and have knowledge of consumption risks, they are also likely to discount such information and are quite reticent to change patterns of abusive behavior. Reasons for such resistance are offered based on what has been learned from cigarette warning research, the fear appeal literature, psychological reactance theory, the persuasive communications field, and studies of addictive behavior. Public policy alternatives are discussed, including the enhancement of warning information, counteradvertising, and alcohol education programs in the process of building cognitive defenses, changing beliefs, and internalizing alcohol risk information.

<http://abs.sagepub.com/content/38/4/622.short>