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Submerging Your Feet in Alcohol Will Not Get You Drunk

Research in the Christmas issue published in the British Medical Journalexplodes the Danish myth that it is possible to get drunk by submerging your feet in alcohol.

The authors, led by Dr. Peter Lommer Kristensen from the Hillerød Hospital in Denmark, say it was important that the myth underwent scientific scrutiny to prevent students wasting their time experimenting with this activity.

Three adult volunteers took part in the study. None of them suffered from any chronic skin or liver disease and they were not addicted to alcohol or psychoactive drugs. The participants were not members of any local Alcoholics Anonymous groups and had not been implicated in any serious accidents or socially embarrassing events related to alcohol in the week prior to the study.

The volunteers drank no alcohol for 24 hours before the experiments and they provided a blood sample before submerging their feet in a washing-up bowl containing three bottles of Karloff Vodka. The participants then kept their feet in the vodka for three hours and provided blood samples every half an hour.

The group undertook a self-assessment for signs of drunkenness -- they rated themselves on a scale of 0 to 10 on self-confidence, urge to speak and the number of times they desired spontaneous hugs.

The results show that after the three hours there was no increase in the concentration of alcohol in the participants' blood stream.

Kristensen concludes "that the Danish urban myth about being able to get drunk by submerging feet in strong alcoholic beverages is just that; a myth".

He adds that the study has many implications including evidence that driving a vehicle or skippering a boat with boots full of Vodka seems to be safe, and brewery workers cannot become intoxicated by 'falling' into a brewery vat.

Christian Stevns Hansen, Louise Holmsgaard Færch and Peter Lommer Kristensen. Testing the validity of the Danish urban myth that alcohol can be absorbed through feet: open labelled self experimental study. BMJ, 341:c6812 DOI: 10.1136/bmj.c6812