

## A BRIEF INTERVENTION

It has been a busy year for Dr. Jeremy Bray, Jefferson-Pilot Excellence Professor in the Bryan School's Department of Economics.

On top of finishing up published survey research on Americans' alcohol consumption habits during the COVID-19 pandemic, he has been planning the 19th International Network on Brief Interventions for Alcohol & Other Drugs (INEBRIA) global conference that will take place right here on UNC Greensboro's campus this fall. All the while, he's been consulting with the World Health Organization – yes, that World Health Organization – about a promising approach called alcohol screening and brief intervention, which involves physicians taking a simple but more proactive approach with their patients to inform them of the dangers of consuming alcohol.

**Dr. Jeremy Bray**  
Jefferson-Pilot  
Excellence Professor

Bray's pandemic research was published in the Journal of Patient-Reported Outcomes. "The pandemic definitely impacted drinking behaviors," he says. "The one that got the most attention was the increase in drinking."

But it is what Bray has learned since conducting this research that has piqued his interest the most – how much we put ourselves at risk every time we drink.

"We now know that alcohol causes cancer, so we recommend drinking limits are getting lower – the current U.S. Department of Agriculture moderation limits are no more than one per day for women, two per day for men; and those do not carry over. So, zero today doesn't mean four tomorrow," he said. "This is the part that is the biggest education piece – we aren't talking about alcohol dependence or alcoholism; this is a health behavior. Alcohol is a carcinogen. The more you drink, the more you put yourself at risk for a variety of cancers related to the digestive tract."

For some, these numbers may come as a surprise – which is why the WHO has taken an interest in Bray's expertise.

"As president of INEBRIA I'm getting invited to these WHO meetings. The European Union is paying for a large brief intervention implementation program across Europe and they're working with the WHO on that, so I've got a meeting scheduled to help consult on the implementation," Bray said. "A little bit of advice from a doctor can go a long way. Alcohol is different than nicotine, for example, in that it is a consumption health behavior many people can control, like red meat or salt or sugar. It's not exempt from the rule of all things in moderation."

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