

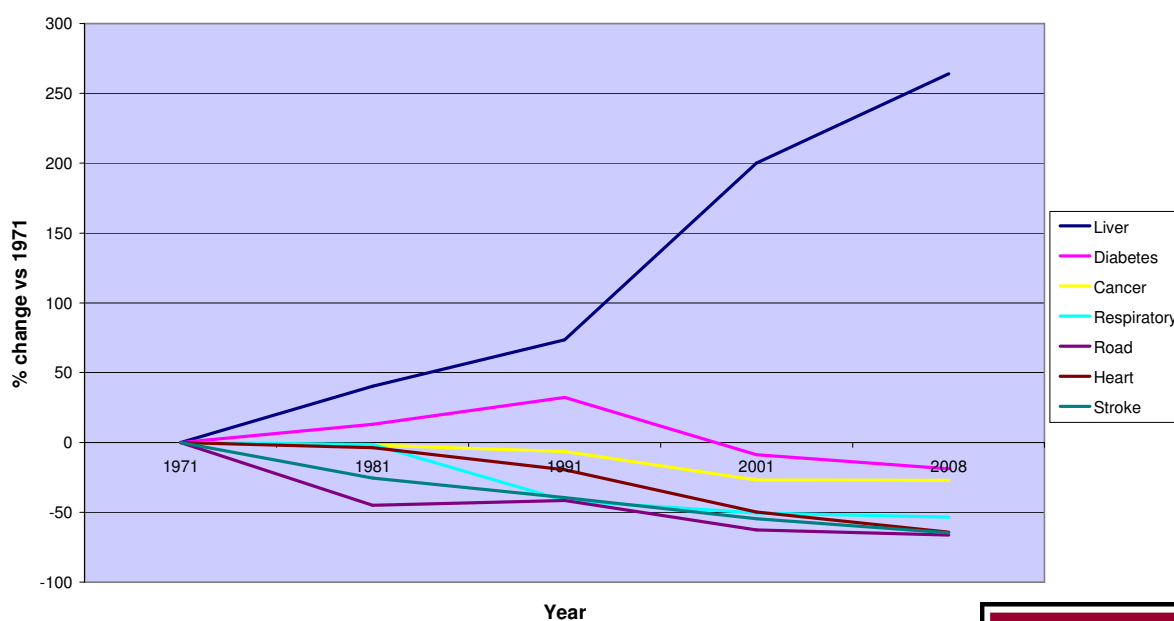
British Liver Trust response to Department of Culture, Media and Sport product placement consultation: January 2010

The British Liver Trust firmly believes that branded products which contain alcohol and foods that are high in fat, salt or sugar (HFSS) should not be 'placed' in television programmes. The Trust is particularly concerned that any form of product placement relating to alcohol and HFSS foods will expose young people and the wider public to harmful marketing influences, which may adversely affect their liver health in the long term and public health more generally. The Trust believes that by encouraging people to purchase products through this subliminal form of marketing will ultimately put their health at risk.

The Trust agrees with the statement from the British Medical Association: "By its nature, product placement allows marketing to be integrated into programmes, blurring the distinction between advertising and editorial, and is not always recognisable."

Liver disease is the fifth most common cause of death in England. Its incidence is rising, mortality rates are increasing, and people are dying younger than ever before. Deaths from liver disease have increased by 12% in the last three years, totaling at least 46,244 lives lost. The graph below illustrates the true extent of liver disease in the UK. Liver disease, when compared to the other five big causes of death, is the only one showing a steady increase year-on-year:

Movements in mortality 1971-2008
Deaths per million of population



Fighting liver disease

Registered Charity No. 298858

Liver disease in adults is currently most frequently associated with excessive alcohol consumption or hepatitis infection through drug abuse, yet projections suggest that obesity could overtake alcohol as a leading cause of liver disease in the future. If the forecasts hold true, today's obese teenagers could be dying of obesity-related liver disease in their 50s or 60s. There needs to be a package of measures to address this, including the prevention of product placement on alcohol and HFSS foods. Liver disease is almost entirely preventable and considerably easier to treat in its early stages; therefore the Trust firmly believes that every prevention strategy available in curbing liver disease should be implemented to prevent the predicted increase in numbers. For example, it has been predicted that in two years, the UK will have the highest rates of liver disease in Europe.

Consumption of alcohol in the UK has increased by 19 per cent over the last three decades and is now higher than in any other European country. Young people are also at an increased risk of developing alcoholic liver disease. A comparison to figures published four years ago shows that there has been a 26% increase in people under the age of 25 dying from alcoholic liver disease in England and Wales. Product placement, in its very nature, operates at a subconscious level where children and young people are particularly susceptible to embedded brand messages.

The British Liver Trust would recommend the DCMS to prohibit product placement for alcohol and HFSS foods.



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