

UW Carbone Cancer Center: Oncologist leads effort to educate about the cancer risk of alcohol

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MADISON, Wis. – Drinking alcohol increases the risk of several types of cancer, something many of Dr. Noelle LoConte’s patients are surprised to learn.

The University of Wisconsin Carbone Cancer Center oncologist took the lead in writing the American Society of Clinical Oncology’s policy statement, published this week in the Journal of Clinical Oncology, which outlines the links between alcohol and cancer risk.

Heavy alcohol use is linked to head and neck cancers, esophageal cancer, the most common type of liver cancer, breast cancer, and colon cancer. Even moderate drinking increases the risk for breast cancer. In 2012, 5.5 percent of all new cancer cases and 5.8 percent of all cancer deaths worldwide were estimated to be attributable to alcohol.

“We wanted to emphasize that there is a strong body of evidence showing a causal link between alcohol consumption and cancer,” says LoConte. “The public health message is that reducing high-risk alcohol consumption is cancer prevention.”

LoConte, an associate professor of medicine at the University of Wisconsin, is a medical oncologist specializing in gastrointestinal cancers. She is also principal investigator at the Wisconsin Comprehensive Cancer Control Program, which aims to reduce the burden of cancer across our state.

More information about alcohol as a risk factor for cancer can be found on ASCO’s

patient information website, Cancer.Net, on the “Alcohol” page of the “Prevention and Healthy Living” section.