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# OFFICIALS RAISE A TOAST TO NEW ALCOHOL MONITOR

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By [Karen Florin](#),

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A group of Connecticut psychiatrists and attorneys are marketing a monitoring bracelet that can help get "the skinny" on somebody's alcohol use.

Actress Lindsay Lohan wore one after finishing a stint in alcohol rehab, and so did the rapper Eve, who had been charged with drunken driving.

The device, called SCRAM — Secure Continuous Remote Alcohol Monitor — measures a wearer's transdermal alcohol concentration, which means that it detects ethanol as it is secreted through the skin via perspiration.

The bracelet, which is worn on the ankle and looks like a set of headphones, is being used in about 43 states and has held up, thus far, to court challenges.

"Two weeks ago, we hooked up our first person in a family law case," said Frank Fortunati, a child psychiatrist who touted the bracelet to attorneys, judges and others at a luncheon in New Haven Thursday. The client, who is involved in a custody dispute, is wearing the bracelet to prove she is not using alcohol during visits with her children.

Local investors in the Connecticut franchise include attorney Dado Coric and his brother, Vlad Coric, a forensic psychiatrist at Yale University who sometimes testifies as an expert witness in court cases. Dado Coric said the device has a lot of potential uses.

"It has applications both in civil and criminal issues, and even with parents of teenagers who are concerned about their kids' alcohol use," he said.

The company is trying to set up a meeting with the state's Court Support Services Division, which has expressed interest in the bracelet, according to Fortunati. They say that in general, the client bears the cost of wearing the bracelet — a hookup fee plus \$13.50 a day — and that a heavy drinker would easily spend that much on liquor.

Around the country, first-time DUI offenders, people awaiting trial, and those on parole or probation are wearing the bracelets. Fortunati said it is also being used as a tool to prevent alcohol-fueled domestic violence, on a college campus in Oklahoma and to assess people in treatment programs.

Old Lyme attorney Conrad Seifert, vice president of the Connecticut Criminal Lawyers Association, said the bracelets could reduce prison overcrowding by giving judges the option of sentencing those convicted of driving under the influence of alcohol to the minimum prison time and bracelet monitoring upon their release.

"This certainly could be a tool for alcohol treatment and assessment," said Janice Heggie Margolis, executive director of the Connecticut chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

Fortunati, who sometimes performs substance-abuse evaluations, said the bracelet could provide a more realistic way to evaluate a person's use of alcohol. In general, the client shows up sober for the evaluation, but the bracelet, worn 24 hours a day, would indicate just how much the person is drinking.

Fortunati explained the science behind the bracelet, which uses the same fuel-cell technology as many breath-testing devices. The results do not pinpoint the exact amount of alcohol use, but they do enable technicians to determine whether a

person consumed a small, moderate or large amount of alcohol.

The liver does the yeoman's work when it comes to processing alcohol, but about 1 percent of alcohol consumed is eliminated through the skin. The bracelet, worn against the skin and ostensibly tamper proof, takes an hourly reading that the wearer transmits once a day via modem to a Denver company that reports the results to the monitoring agency.

*k.florin@theday.com*

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