



VOL. 12, NO. 2

Physician's Alcohol NEWSLETTER



JUNE 1977

Alcoholic women abuse prescription drugs

Alcoholic women are likely to abuse prescription drugs that they have obtained legally, Elizabeth R. Morrissey and Marc A. Schuckit, M.D. of the Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Institute, University of Washington, Seattle, told the 1977 National Drug Abuse Conference held at San Francisco, May 5-9, 1977, in a session on Alcohol, Drugs and Women chaired by Frank A. Seixas, M.D., Medical Director of NCA. They studied a series of 300 women interviewed within 24 hours of admission to a county alcohol detoxification center. Over a quarter of the women had abused barbiturates, amphetamines, or both; and 15% met diagnostic criteria for drug abuse. One quarter had obtained drugs of abuse legally, with over half of the women securing prescriptions for tranquilizers or barbiturates at the same time they were drinking at an alcoholic level. The high incidence of depression (18%) and of suicide attempts (40%) are evidence of the dangers involved in the simultaneous abuse of drugs and alcohol.

Other Reports

- The first complete report of a three-year research project on the implications of alcohol abuse for the treatment of drug addicts was presented by Harriet Barr, Ph.D., Arie Cohen, Ph.D., and Donald J. Ottenberg, M.D. of the Eagleville (Pa.) Hospital and Rehabilitation Center. The prevalence of problem drinking was very high among the drug addict sample. Those subjects with a history of problem drinking differed significantly from the drug addicts in reporting less happy childhoods, more often death of a parent, violence, abuse and bizarre behavior in the home, alcohol abusers in the immediate family, and hyperactivity and concentration difficulties in school. Their adult lives were characterized more by criminality, illegal means of support, residential instability, and a preponderance of heavy drinkers as friends.

They were more deeply involved in all aspects of drug abuse than were the non-

(Continued on page 4)

VA study recommends separate alcohol treatment programs at AMSA - NCA Medical-Scientific sessions

The conventional *separate* treatment programs for alcoholism and drug abuse each showed statistically significant better outcomes than combined alcohol and drug abuse treatment programs in a large cooperative VA research study, reported Dr. Stewart Baker, Jr., M.D., Associate Director (for Alcohol and Drug Dependence), Mental Health and Behavioral Sciences Service, VACO. He spoke at the Medical Scientific meeting of the National Alcoholism Forum of the National Council on Alcoholism, held in San Diego, May 2-4, 1977. The meeting was cosponsored by AMSA.

Ten combined treatment modalities were established in 1974 and followed, along with seven alcohol dependence treatment centers and seven drug dependence treatment programs. The results of the six-month follow-up of 686 patients will point the way to the retention of traditional proven separate treatment modalities for alcohol and drug abuse in the VA hospital system.

Effect of ethanol on female gonads reported at Gross symposium

Ethanol is toxic for the female gonad, and sexual dysfunction can occur in female alcoholics in the absence of irreversible histologic and biochemical liver disease, according to D.H. van Thiel, J.S. Gavalier, and R. Lester of the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. They presented their findings, based on the development of an experimental animal model, at the Milton M. Gross Memorial Symposium on Alcoholism, held April 1-2, 1977, in Chicago.

Also at the symposium Paul Y. Sze, of the University of Connecticut, outlined the role of glucocorticoids in the development of ethanol dependence and tolerance. His mice studies indicate that brain serotonergic activity may be a significant component in the development of ethanol dependence, at least in audiogenic seizures as a withdrawal sign, and that glucocorticoids may be involved at some point in the sequence of cellular events underlying these actions of ethanol.

A.C. Church, J.L. Fuller, and B.D. Dudek of SUNY, Binghamton, reported evidence that supports the notion that some of the behavioral effects of ethanol, particularly the depressant effects, may be mediated by salsolinol, a compound putatively formed following alcohol ingestion. Animals which are genetically sensitive to alcohol were also found to be sensitive to salsolinol.

Several other papers were presented at the symposium.

The three major study questions answered were the change in use of alcohol or drugs; the incidence of medical problems; and the evidence of psychological problems, including mood, self-esteem, and disorders of perception and thinking.

"The major question with which we were ultimately concerned was whether combined or conventional treatment had differential effectiveness. The analysis of the differential effectiveness of the combined setting vs. the conventional setting utilized in the treatment of alcohol dependent patients indicates several areas of statistically significant better outcome for the conventional setting... The combined setting had no statistically significant advantages in outcome measures addressing the treatment goals," said Dr. Baker.

Dr. Baker's co-authors of the study are Theodore Lorei, M.S.W., Social Science Analyst, Health Services Research and Development Service, VACO; Harry A. McKnight, Jr., Staff Assistant (for Alcohol and Drug Dependence), Mental Health and Behavioral Sciences Service, VACO; and Jeffery L. Duvall, B.A., Social Science Analyst, Health Services Research and Development Service, VACO.

Biological and Biochemical Reports

- In an investigation performed to identify the enzyme responsible for the reduction of chloral in rat liver, John Schutz and Henry Weiner of Purdue University found that ADH is incapable of reducing chloral at physiological coenzyme ratios and that trichloroethanol is a potent competitive inhibitor of ADH.

(Continued on page 3)

EDITORIAL

Assessing The Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

Both NCA and the NIAAA have now publicly warned the nation's women of the hazards of drinking during pregnancy. Both will be waging campaigns to instruct obstetricians, pediatricians, and other medical people about the condition and to alert women to their options.

Through the generosity of the Pew Memorial Trust, NCA has been empowered to award three grants to fetal alcohol syndrome researchers. NIAAA is providing a special thrust to this research. The new Research Society on Alcoholism has accepted these workers as a special subcommittee which will continue periodic meetings (the group has now had four) to standardize terms and attempt to make the research projects complementary rather than competitive.

One of the subjects of a granted study is the exploration of whether and to what extent social drinking and binge drinking may cause lesser effects, similar to the well-demonstrated changes resulting from heavy steady drinking. This information is needed rapidly to reassure women now in pregnancy who have been drinking moderately up to now.

A new entity has appeared on the medical scene. Without panic it is time to assess it. It seems that abstinence for the short nine months would not be too high a price to pay until current research determines more definitively what is safe. For those who have been drinking small quantities up to now, there is no present cause for great alarm.

FAS

International traffic experts find nonpunitive measures effective for drinking drivers

The majority of 237 international specialists surveyed on 42 currently proposed countermeasures to alleviate the drinking-driving problem agreed that increased detection, education, research and therapy were effective. Less effective were measures that tried to induce attitude change, stressed punishment, and tried to reduce driving after drinking. Measures that aimed at reduction of drinking, especially by forced restrictions, were seen as ineffective.

S. Israelstam and S. Lambert of Toronto, who conducted the study, concluded that the specialists' attitudes were mainly formulated on the basis of belief in individual freedom rather than their occupation, orientation and training, or place of residence.

Alcohol research files available at Rutgers

The new Inventory listing of the Ralph G. Connor Alcohol Research Reference Files (formerly Research Reference Files) is now available from the Rutgers Center of Alcohol Studies. The Reference Files, a joint service of the National Council on Alcoholism and the Center of Alcohol Studies, are a growing collection of questionnaires, interview schedules and survey forms (currently about 275) used in research on drinking and alcoholism. The subject categories include drinking among young people, drinking history, drinking and driving, alcoholism treatment, AA, treatment, screening tests, and evaluation, among others.

Copies of the instruments are available from the Center at a cost of 10 cents a page (minimum \$1). A bibliography of known published works that are based on each instrument will be included with each copy.

Requests for a copy of the Inventory, inquiries, and instruments for deposit should be addressed to: CARRF, Center for Alcohol Studies, Rutgers University, Allison Rd., Piscataway, NJ 08854.

Traffic and Highway Safety Meeting at NCA Alcoholism Forum

- Alcohol may be the single most frequent factor contributing to aviation fatalities in noncommercial aviation. The FAA has a comprehensive program of periodic medical examination leading to medical certification, said Barton Paukull, M.D., Office of Aviation Medicine, FAA. An established history or clinical diagnosis of alcoholism is grounds for denial of certification, which can be reinstated.

- Robert B. Voas, of the National Highway Safety Traffic Administration, said that the DOT's Alcohol Safety Action Programs have proved that they can be a major case-finding activity for the alcoholism program. Moreover, because most of the subjects of the enforcement effort are well-to-do members of the community, the clients can support, through fees, the additional costs of controlling the problem. ASAPs have demonstrated that where properly implemented, they can reduce the number of drunk-driving accidents.

- An analytic comparison of 118 persons arrested for driving while intoxicated and 247 alcohol detoxification patients showed several important differences. About one quarter of the DWI's perceived "something wrong" with their drinking behavior, but about one-third possessed attributes characteristic of detoxification patients. The study was conducted by Roger Bell et al. of University of Louisville School of Medicine.

MEETINGS

JULY 10-15—Canadian Foundation on Alcohol and Drug Dependencies, Annual Conference, Winnipeg, Canada. Information from ICAA, case postale 140, 1001 Lausanne, Switzerland.

AUGUST 4-7—Annual Meeting, International Doctors in Alcoholics Anonymous. Statler Hilton, New York City. Information from Lewis K. Reed, M.D., IDAA, 1950 Volney Rd., Youngstown, Ohio 44511.

AUGUST 21-26—International Medical Symposium on Alcohol and Drug Dependence, Tokyo and Kyoto, Japan. For information, write ICAA, case postale 140, 1001 Lausanne, Switzerland.

AUGUST 28-SEPTEMBER 1—NATO International Conference on "Behavioral Approaches to Alcoholism," to be held at the Solstrand Fjord Hotel near Bergen, Norway. For further information, contact Dr. Peter Nathan, Department of Psychology, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J. 08903.

SEPTEMBER 6-9—First Regional Congress of International Association for Social Psychiatry, Santa Barbara, CA. Theme will be "Contemporary Issues and Approaches in Social Psychiatry," and the Conference will include sessions on alcohol and drug abuse. For information, write: John L. Carleton, M.D., 2323 Oak Park Lane, Santa Barbara, CA 93105.

SEPTEMBER 25-29—Annual Meeting, Alcohol and Drug Problems Association of North America, Detroit, Michigan. For information, write: ADPA, 1101 15th Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20005.

OCTOBER 16-21—7th International Institute on the Prevention and Treatment of Drug Dependence, Lisbon, Portugal. For information, write ICAA, case postale 140, 1001 Lausanne, Switzerland.

BOOKS

Alcoholism Problems in Women and Children. Edited by Milton Greenblatt, M.D. and Marc Schuckit, M.D. New York: Grune & Stratton, Inc., 1976. 304 pp. \$19.50.

A collection of essays. Of special importance is the coverage given to the fetal alcoholism syndrome and the seriousness of alcoholism in pregnancy.

Currents in Alcoholism, Vols. I and II. Edited by Frank A. Seixas. New York: Grune & Stratton, Inc. 1977. \$19.50 each volume.

Papers delivered at the track sessions of the 7th NCA-AMSA Medical Scientific Conference, held May 1976.

More reports from AMSA-NCA conference

(Continued from page 1)

Aldehyde reductase is responsible for TCE formation in the body, and ADH is highly active when ethanol is present. This mechanism could be responsible for some interactions between ethanol and certain drugs.

- A new rat strain with high alcohol preference has been raised by L. Lumeng, M.D. et al. of Indiana University School of Medicine.

- Procedures for establishing ethanol as a reinforcer in rhesus monkeys were reported by Richard A. Meisch, M.D., and Jack E. Henningfield of the University of Minnesota.

- Preliminary studies of alcohol metabolism by human cell cultures, said Richard Holmes, Ph.D., of the Alfred I. duPont Institute, Wilmington, show that short-term experiments reflect the inherent ability of the cell to metabolize alcohol, and to display a large degree of tolerance.

- A study by Janet A. McComb and Dora B. Goldstein, M.D. of Stanford University School of Medicine showed that t-butanol was roughly five times more potent than ethanol in producing physical dependence in mice. Since t-BuOH is about five times more lipid-soluble than ethanol, the data are consistent with a membrane site for alcohols in producing physical dependence.

Clinical Studies

- A high incidence of radiologic and histologic evidence of bone disease, mainly osteoporosis, was found in 11 alcoholic men studied by A. Marquez-Julio, M.D., N. Dombros, M.D., D.G. Oreopoulos, M.D. and the Calcium Task Group of the University of Toronto. Chronic low dietary calcium may be important in the development of these changes.

- No differences in human performance on behavioral tasks under alcohol were gender-related in a study conducted by Marcelline Burns, Ph.D. and Herbert Moskowitz, Ph.D. of the University of California, Los Angeles.

- Platform-balance performance may be a more sensitive indicator of intoxication than walk-the-line performance, suggest R.L. Alakana, et al. of the University of California, Irvine. They base their conclusion on studies of 12 drug-free male moderate drinkers evaluated by a professional criminalist in alcohol and placebo sessions.

- Jan Kuzma, Ph.D. and Roland L. Phillips, M.D. of Loma Linda University reported on the characteristics of 7,000 drinking and non-drinking mothers and their offspring in a prospective collaborative study in Southern California.

Psychiatric and Psychological Studies

- Activity in group therapy as an inpatient usually is followed by activity in maintaining abstinence after discharge, said A.N. Browne-Mayers, M.D., et al. of the New York Hospital, Cornell Medical Center, White Plains. "Participating" patients (as rated by therapists) obtained the best results, with 54% maintaining total abstinence for the past six months. Only 32% of the nonparticipants maintained abstinence.

- Alcoholics on the Fixed Interval Drinking Decisions program at the VA Hospital in Coatesville, Pa., make 13 daily drinking decisions. A.L. Alterman et al. studied the extent to which the alcoholic can exercise control over his drinking, and found that abusive drinking was shown by a majority of the program drinkers, varying degrees of control over drinking were also apparent, and these

were associated with differential treatment outcomes.

- Those involuntarily committed to psychiatric facilities should be screened for alcohol-related difficulties, and appropriate treatment facilities and services should be made available, said H.M. Ginzburg, M.D., J.R. Rapoport, M.D., and D.A. Paskewitz, Ph.D. of National Institute on Drug Abuse.

- A study of alcoholic behaviors in depressed black men by Eric W. Fine, M.D. and Robert Steer, Ed.D. of the West Philadelphia Community Mental Health Consortium, showed that severely depressed patients reported more frequent episodes of drinking leading to intoxication. Persons who were only mildly depressed described significantly longer intervals between drinks. Drinking upon awakening occurred more frequently in the severely depressed men as opposed to the moderately depressed.

- Since 1971 the VA has hired over 600 former alcoholics to work as counselors; problems encountered have been selection, training, supervision, career advancement and maintenance of abstinence or drug-free status. According to Joel M. Cantor of the VA Central Office, of particular interest are reasons given for terminating employment, ranging from pressure of the job to returning to school full-time.

Social and Epidemiological Studies

- The therapeutic impact of six different combinations of treatment modalities and no treatment were studied in a statewide network of 22 alcoholism programs serving 4,027 clients by Alfonso Paredes, M.D. and Dick Gregory, M.S. There were no significant differences in outcome between the various methods of treatment intervention. A trend indicated that combinations incorporating intermediate care might show some superiority, but it was not statistically significant. The treatment combinations represented a wide range of investment in terms of dollars. Therapeutic outcome was not a covariant of amount of dollars reimbursed.

- The Nebraska Division on Alcoholism has established a planning model to establishing priorities for service development based on two sources of data: projections based on a model alcoholism service delivery system, and a survey of currently existing resources. According to William E. Ford, Ph.D., et al., common service elements between both sources include: emergency/detoxification, inpatient, partial, quarterway, and halfway, and outpatient care. Computer mapping techniques have been used to demonstrate the needs assessment.

Physician's Alcohol Newsletter

is published quarterly by the American Medical Society on Alcoholism, Inc., a component of the National Council on Alcoholism. Publication has been made possible by a grant from the Christopher D. Smithers Foundation. Individual subscriptions \$8 per year.

For membership information, contact AMSA at address below.

Copyright 1977 by American Medical Society on Alcoholism, Inc.

733 Third Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10017

All rights reserved.

Editorial Board

Editor-in-Chief:

FRANK A. SELIXAS, M.D., Internist,
New York City

Managing Editor: CAROL LEVINE

Associate Editors:

CHARLES E. BECKER, M.D., internist,
San Francisco, Calif.

LUTHER CLOUD, M.D., internist,
New York City

JOHN EWING, M.D., psychiatrist,
Chapel Hill, N.C.

RUTH FOX, M.D., psychiatrist,
New York City

DONALD G. MACKAY, M.D.,
Montreal, Quebec

ALFONSO PAREDES, M.D., psychiatrist,
Oklahoma City

Further reports from the conference will appear in the next issue of PAN.

Further alcohol reports from National Drug Abuse Conference

(Continued from page 1)

problem drinking addicts, used a wider variety of drugs, were more consciously motivated by psychological needs, reported more loss of control over their drug use, and had more bad reactions and complications from drug abuse, including accidental overdose. They were more depressed, anxious, dependent, resistant to authority, and suicidal. The prevalence of excessive alcohol consumption and alcohol problems on follow-up was not different from that on intake.

The study showed no evidence that methadone maintenance produces alcohol abuse. The widespread alcohol abuse among methadone clients existed before treatment, and methadone maintenance merely fails to control it.

- Sanford J. Feinglass, Ph.D., and Myra Lappin, M.P.P. of the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio reported that alcohol abuse, drug abuse and pregnancy are potentially causative factors in child abuse and neglect. The addicted woman is often a product of battering, both as a child and as an adult, and has a deep sense of personal inadequacy. Many abusive parents are socially isolated, mistrustful, and have no "life-lines" or resources in times of stress.

- Patients entering treatment for drug and alcohol abuse report generally reliable information on social and demographic data, arrests, and income but are less reliable when reporting alcohol and drug abuse, according to a study conducted by Andrew L. Homer and Steven M. Ross, of the VA Hospital, Salt Lake City.

- Acupuncture might ameliorate withdrawal reactions, said Kenneth Blum, Ph.D. of the University of Texas Health Science Center, San Antonio, by the following mechanism: it may induce the release of natural opiate-like polypeptides (endorphins), which would, via opiate receptor interactions, simulate synthetic opiate(s) and ethanol; via activation of the auricular branch of the vagus nerve, acupuncture may alter bioogenic amine activity in the direction of maintaining catecholaminergic activity during opiate/ethanol exposure, releasing dopamine during opiate/ethanol withdrawal, and preventing noradrenergic receptor supersensitivity during the withdrawal phase. Blum also reported an alkaloid-based hypothesis concerning the biochemical rationale for the use of peyote as an ethnopsychedelic tool for the potential treatment of alcoholism and other drug dependencies.

- Comparison of positive urinalysis finding to self-report of substance abuse by addicts and alcoholics at Eagleville (Pa.) Hospital indicates a serious degree

of underreporting, said Dana Brayan. Addicts and alcoholics usually will report using their primary substance (when using), but secondary and tertiary substances, used in place of, or concurrently with, primary substances usually will not be reported.

- Commander Gerald A. Bunn, of the Navy Alcohol Safety Action Program, San Diego, reported that of 600 graduates of the pilot project at Pensacola, the recidivism rate has been less than 5%. A second site has been opened at Norfolk, and by the end of 1977, 11 sites will be operative. The basic approach is to identify individuals through crisis intervention and to motivate them to take positive action.

- Alcohol is the primary drug of abuse in the gay community, and poly-drug abuse is common. According to a panel chaired by Robert H. Eichberg, Ph.D., gay men and women do not tend to participate in treatment programs, most of which are non-gay, but to seek help at gay counseling programs, where they can be open about their homosexuality.

- The extended-role nurse has been an effective and economical agent in the Community Health Projects' three ambulatory drug and alcohol clinics in the San Gabriel valley region of Los Angeles, according to Pamela Jankowski, R.N., Judy Jackson, R.N., and Dianna Patton, R.N. Duties of the extended-role nurse include: physical examinations, administration of medications, day-to-day clinic management, personnel management, and treatment of common medical problems. A physician is available for consultation at all times.

- Drawing from a data base of 9,000 magazine liquor advertisements, Brigitte Jordan, Ph.D., and JoAnn Goldberg,

Ph.D. of the Departments of Anthropology and Community Medicine, Michigan State University, showed that popular media advertising influences alcohol consumption. They pointed out that problems personified by the image of the "solitary drinker" are "solved" in the advertising by portrayals of the "couple motif," thus transforming the socially dangerous "solitary" drink into the acceptable "social" drink.

- The National Youth Alternatives Project's pilot study of 600 adolescent runaways showed that over 80% had left home because of family problems (12% because of parental alcohol abuse), and 60% used alcohol to avoid anger or worry. Therese van Houton of NYAP, Washington, D.C., hypothesized that there is a positive correlation between stress and adolescent alcohol abuse and running away. A study of 600 additional runaways confirmed this.

- Treatment services for adolescent alcohol users should be framed so that characteristics of teenage drinkers are understood, said Paul D. Weber and Joan H. Brame of the New Jersey State Department of Health. These characteristics include: teenage alcohol usage occurs in a context and is not an isolated behavior; the teenager is a member of many systems, notably his family, peer group, school, etc.; the adolescent client is usually an involuntary client; the adolescent client typically has strained relationships with adults.

- Vietnam veterans, whose problem drinking declined overseas while narcotics use rose sharply, have reported higher than ever alcohol use three years after their return to civilian life, according to a study conducted by Eric Wish, Lee Robins, and Charles Lavazzi of the Department of Psychiatry, Washington University, St. Louis.

PHYSICIAN'S ALCOHOL NEWSLETTER

733 Third Avenue
New York, New York 10017