A Prescription for Alcohol?

Islamic universities are credited with its application to medicine 1500 years later. The use of alcohol for medicinal purposes was still widely regarded into the 20th century as shown in the academic journal, *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine*. In 1920, a physician wrote in this journal, “Alcohol is, I suppose, the most valuable sedative and hypnotic drug we possess for infants and young children.”

In some cases, alcohol could comprise as much as 40% of a patient’s daily intake. It’s high caloric density (seven calories/gram) and the ease with which it is absorbed into the bloodstream made alcohol ideal for patients suffering delirium or for those who were otherwise unable to eat.

When Prohibition was enacted in 1920, the use of alcohol as medicine was halted. Frustrated with what they viewed as interference by the federal government in medical practices, physicians lobbied Congress for the authority to prescribe medicinal alcohol. But by then, scientific research was beginning to refute alcohol’s therapeutic effects.

Brandy and whiskey were still listed as official drugs in the U. S. until the 1940’s and ethanol was listed until 1975. By this time, however, alcohol’s long-term deleterious effects were becoming evident, and only a select handful of doctors clung to the notion of alcohol as medicine.


10 Year Retest Sessions

Our historic 10 year examination sessions are well under way! It has been a pleasure to assist our first set of participants in their travel to our laboratory at the University of Chicago and undergo two experimental sessions.

Thus far, all of the participants eligible have been able to make the trip back to our laboratories. We had an impressive 88% of participants at our 5 year sessions and hope to see 70% back for the 10 year sessions.

If you’d like to participate, please keep our inclusion criteria in mind so that you are ready to go when your re-test month arrives. In order to be a part of the 10 year re-test sessions, you must have had alcohol within the last 6 months, must not be nursing, pregnant, or have plans to become pregnant within 3 months of your sessions, must be able to be abstinent from drugs or alcohol for 48 hours prior to each session, and must be able to visit Chicago for at least 3 days.

Director’s Note

Summer greetings! In this issue of "What’s On Tap?", we cover historical use of alcohol and CSDP 10 year re-test sessions. We also include an interview with Patrick McNamara, our project manager. As always, we hope that you are doing well and we look forward to following up with you.

Thanks again for your continued participation.

Dr. Andrea King

Next $100 Follow-Up Raffle

All participants completing an Annual Follow-Up interview on time will be automatically entered into a drawing for prizes, which include a $100 gift card.

The next follow-up raffle will take place on: October 15, 2014.

All eligible participants and winners will be notified in advance via e-mail, so make sure to keep your contact info up to date!
Lab Spotlight: Patrick McNamara

In this issue, the lab spotlight is on project coordinator, Patrick, who is approaching his tenth year with the lab and whose length of time working with CSDP is second to only Dr. King:

Q) How did you initially come to work with Dr. King and the CSDP?
A) I had moved to Chicago following school and was fast becoming burned out in my position working with the developmentally disabled. I came across an ad in the Chicago Reader seeking a research assistant, interviewed, and the rest is history!

Q) Why did you decide to stay with the lab over the past 10 years?
A) Initially, this was supposed to be a chance to gain some experience before grad school. However, Dr. King afforded me with many great opportunities to manage studies, publish, and present data over the years, and the experiences provided made staying on well worth it.

Q) Over the past 10 years, What has been your favorite part of working with the CSDP?
A) The follow-up component has been pretty incredible. I’ve especially enjoyed getting to run the additional retest sessions with the same participants across different time periods, which is an incredibly unique component for this kind of research.

Q) Favorite hobbies or activities?
A) I’ve recently taken up running again with the hope of completing the Chicago Marathon next year, love going to movies, have been slowly learning Mandarin, and have developed an odd penchant for reading young adult book series set in a dystopian future.

Q) What’s your favorite TV show right now?
A) I hold firmly to the belief that television was forever spoiled when “LOST” went off the air. I am, however, a big fan of Orange is the New Black on Netflix.

Q) Could you indulge us with your most embarrassing moment of high school?
A) Picture it: High School, speech tournament, badly made pants with stitching in the seat which ripped open completely during the first minute of my performance. I spent the next 8 minutes frantically, yet casually, trying not to moon the entire audience. I was not successful...

Who Said It?

While these individuals are famous for their contributions to culture and politics, some of their most memorable quotes have to do with smoking! Put your trivia knowledge to the test by matching each quote to its author. Answers are provided below.

1) “Giving up smoking is the easiest thing in the world. I know because I’ve done it thousands of times.”

2) “Smoking kills. If you’re killed, you’ve lost a very important part of your life.”

3) “I stopped smoking. When I stopped smoking, my voice changed...so drastically, I couldn’t believe myself.”

4) “My rule of life prescribed as an absolutely sacred rite smoking cigars and also the drinking of alcohol before, after and if need be during all meals and in the intervals between them.”

5) “I’ll never feel comfortable taking a strong drink, and I’ll never feel easy smoking a cigarette. I just don’t think those things are right for me.”

A) Winston Churchill
B) Bob Dylan
C) Mark Twain
D) Elvis Presley
E) Brooke Shields
While a common axiom at the doctor’s office may be to reduce alcohol intake, it wasn’t always so. Surprisingly, there was a time when alcohol was considered a valuable medicinal drug. In fact, the use of alcohol in medicines goes back a long time into human history. In areas of China, Mesopotamia, and Egypt these beverages were sometimes used to administer herbal medicines. In Greece the practice of mixing herbs in wine began before the time of Hippocrates. Although the process of distillation was probably discovered in China, alchemists at Islamic universities are credited with its application to medicine 1500 years later.

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Well, we thought that we were impressive with the follow-up rate for the original cohort, but we were proven wrong by your cohort! The original cohort has a 98.2% follow-up rate, while your cohort boasts a 100% follow-up rate!

We are amazed and grateful for the dedication of your cohort of participants to the Chicago Social Drinking Project. Your commitment enables the CSDP to conduct thorough analyses of our longitudinal data and provide more holistic answers to questions about young adults’ use of common substances. Thank you for being a part of a new era of comprehensive psychological science.
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