

Alcohol

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Alcohol Alcohol can be traced back to ancient times when Egyptians used beer and wine for ritual and celebratory purposes (Hanson 1995). Osiris, the god of wine, was praised throughout the entire land of Egypt. The Egyptians believed that this important god also invented beer, a beverage that was considered a necessity of life and was brewed in the home. Both beer and wine were created for and sacrificed to the gods. Fast-forward 12, 000 years and the variety of alcohol has become so numerous, people no longer need a reason to drink. However, most of the population is unaware of the chemical reaction that is occurring within their body every time they take a sip. It has always been evident that alcohol has an effect on brain function, which in turn impairs the behavior of a person. Not only has alcohol been linked to multiple physical issues but also mental and emotional. When alcohol is consumed it can create acetaldehyde in the brain to allow a chemical reaction to take place with other elements already in the brain waiting to be activated. When acetaldehyde reacts with chemicals such as dopamine, serotonin, and norepinephrine then there is a strong chance that psychoactive alkaloids such as salvinorin will be produced (Sullivan et. al 2010). Acetaldehyde is present everywhere in the atmosphere and may be produced in the body due to the breakdown of ethanol. Acute (short-term) exposure to acetaldehyde results in disturbances such as irritation of the eyes, skin, and respiratory tract. Symptoms of chronic (long-term) intoxication of acetaldehyde seem to be parallel with those of alcoholism. Besides these physical effects, alcohol has been seen as playing a role in multiple sexual outcomes and processes. It not only changes a person's sexual latency but also impairs their view on a potential mate's physical

appeal (George and Stoner 2000). Even knowing that another person has drunk can influence the way he or she is viewed. And although alcohol is commonly known to be a social lubricant, it can also severely impair judgment and cause a person to carry out an action or become interested in something they otherwise would never explore or even encounter. In today's modern society alcohol addiction and alcohol abuse has become one of the most complex, life-threatening issues. Most depressed individuals usually indulge themselves in bars or pubs with their alcohols to escape from their stressful life. It has become increasingly alarming how alcohol does not only attract the adults, but also teenagers these days. " Research has shown that approximately 14 million Americans (7. 4%) of the population meet the diagnostic criteria for alcohol abuse or alcoholism" (" Facts about Alcohol"). Alcohol addicts may encounter social impact such as loss of respect from others who may see the problem as self- inflictive and easily avoided. Repeated use of alcohol over a period of time can result in alcohol abuse. Millions of people enjoy drinking on occasion. When drinking becomes a routine, people become dependent. Alcohol addiction has enormous and somewhat fatal consequences on humans. It has, directly or otherwise, an impact on the individual, family, friends and the society. Alcohol is a very serious and dangerous drug, although it is not treated this way anymore. College students have taken drinking to a new level in which, for many, is very scary. Alcohol is much more dangerous than many would think. Kids see a night of drinking as a great way to have fun and party but do not see the consequences. Getting drunk and even blacking out can lead to many problems. When alcohol is consumed in unhealthy amounts, it can lead to

not only short-term effects, but long-term ones as well. Many people could tell you what alcohol will do to you. Blurred vision, memory loss, slurred speech, difficulty walking, and slow reaction times are all very common side effects depending on how much one consumes (National Institute on Alcohol abuse, 2004). To most, there is nothing wrong with this. Party all night, have a good time, find somewhere to sleep, pass out, and wake up in the morning. A couple of Advil and a glass of water and you are good to go, no harm done. This is where many are wrong. These effects are not just short term, they all add up in the long-term run. Alcohol abuse is growing rapidly throughout U. S. society. One in every twelve adults is being diagnosed with alcohol abuse (Barlow and Durand, 2006). All that are diagnosed with alcohol abuse must meet one or more of the following criteria within a twelve month period: he/she must fail to accomplish major work, school or home responsibilities; he/she is careless to where his/ her drinking is taking place, even if it's in dangerous situations such as driving or while operating machinery; he/ she must have recurring alcohol-related legal problems, such as getting arrested for driving under the influence or physically hurting someone while drunk; and lastly, he/ she must continue to drink even after the world around him/ her begins to shatter, meaning his/ her relationships worsen due to his/ her excessive alcohol intake (Stephens, 2007). Alcohol dependence is known to be the most severe form of alcohol abuse. A person becomes so dependent on alcohol consumption that he/she loses sight of all the other important things going on around him/her. Family matters and social responsibilities become secondary worries to his/her primary concern for existence, which is drinking (Stephens, 2007). Nearly fourteen million Americans are somewhat

dependent on alcohol. Alcohol dependence is more prominent in men, and young adults ages 18-29 (Stephens, 2007). According to a study done by Saitz " 85, 000 deaths, along with substantial disability from medical and psychiatric consequences, injuries and " secondhand" effects (ex: motor vehicle crashes) are attributed to the use of alcohol" (Saitz, 2005). Studies have shown that the amount of drinking that goes on in colleges is higher than anywhere else and that alcohol is the underlying cause in 50% of date rape cases. There is a strong negative correlation between low GPA scores and the amount of alcohol consumption in college students. The drinking age has been raised in many states in an effort to curtail the number of car accidents; this movement has reduced the number of car accidents (Barlow and Durand, 2006). Alcohol dependence has a much more pronounced medical effect on women than on men. Medical problems due to alcohol dependence, involving brain, heart and liver damage are more severe and advance quicker in women than men (Stephens, 2007). The symptoms of alcoholism include all of the following: a strong craving for alcohol consumption, a loss of control and inability to limit one's drinking on any occasion, physical dependence such as evidence of withdrawal symptoms and significantly higher tolerance level to alcohol. Withdrawal symptoms include nausea, vomiting, sweating, shaking, hallucinations (visual or auditory), anxiety and seizures (Barlow and Durand, 2006). The causes of alcoholism can be attributed either to genetic or environmental factors. Children of alcoholics have a 50-60% chance of becoming alcoholic according to Barlow and Durand (2006). They have a higher tolerance for alcohol intake than most people. The child's alcohol dependence can also be

due in part to the fact that throughout childhood, alcohol was habitually around, which is an environmental factor (Barlow and Durand, 2006). There are two main treatment methods for alcoholism that are the source of controversy today. Abstinence, most prominently advocated by the self-help group, Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), is defined as "the act of refraining from engaging in a positively reinforced, or pleasurable, behavior" (Leischow, 2002). To abstain from drinking is to commit to never take a drink again in your life time, as opposed to "controlled drinking" where you rely on personal self control to determine when you have consumed enough alcohol. In the U. S. A., abstinence is believed to be the treatment of choice after suffering from alcohol abuse (Leischow, 2002).