



## The Communication Committee presents:

### The International Society for Biomedical Research on Alcoholism BULLETIN

*Contributing to the advancement of alcohol research globally*

#### Communication Committee Updates

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- ✓ **“Interview with a Scientist”** ISBRA Bulletin interviews Dr. Gyongyi Szabo.
- ✓ Several **New Job Postings** for various career level openings.
- ✓ **“Publications You May Have Missed”** and **“New Directions”** discuss Recent Findings on Cardiovascular Disease and Alcohol Drinking.
- ✓ Research funding opportunities focused on the **Pathology and Treatment Development relevant for Alcohol-Associated Cardiovascular Diseases.**
- ✓ Conference Report on the **44th Research Society on Alcoholism Virtual Meeting.**

#### Publications You May Have Missed

By Andrea Vásquez Ferreiro B.A. and Robert Leeman Ph.D.

When people consider which organs are affected by excessive alcohol consumption, most will think first about the liver, however, the heart also suffers the consequences of alcohol misuse. Moreover, genetics, socioeconomic status, racial, and other factors can influence the relationship between alcohol misuse and cardiovascular disease. The literature contains contrasting results regarding the impact of alcohol on cardiovascular-related issues. In several studies, drinking alcohol in moderation has been associated with a reduced risk of cardiovascular diseases and mortality, though some studies have yielded contrasting findings.

## Cont. Publications You May Have Missed

By Andrea Vásquez Ferreiro B.A. and Robert Leeman, Ph.D.

Results of most (but not all) studies lead to a conclusion that excessive alcohol consumption is associated with an increased risk of cardiovascular disease. In the United States, the prevalence of alcohol cardiomyopathy in addiction units was relatively low, but noticeable in 2020. This month's column covers recent research on the topic of alcohol and cardiovascular diseases, deaths, and complications.

[Alcohol consumption, cardiac biomarkers, and risk of atrial fibrillation and adverse outcomes](#)

**In:** European Heart Journal, 2021

**By:** Dora Csengeri, Ngoc-Anh Sprünker, Augusto Di Castelnuovo, Teemu Niiranen, Julie Kk. Vishram-Nielsen, Simona Costanzo, Stefan Söderberg, Steen M. Jensen, Erkki Vartiainen, Maria Benedetta Donati, Christina Magnussen, Stephan Camen, Francesco Gianfagna, Maja-Lisa Løchen, Frank Kee, Jukka Kontto, Ellisiv B. Mathiesen, Wolfgang Koenig, Stefan Blankenberg, Giovanni de Gaetano, Torben Jørgensen, Kari Kuulasmaa, Tanja Zeller, Veikko Salomaa, Licia Iacoviello, & Renate B. Schnabel

*Atrial fibrillation (AF) is when a person experiences an irregular heartbeat that could produce blood clots, stroke, and other heart-related problems. AF is now one of the main factors responsible for numerous cardiovascular complications and deaths in the past century. Acute and habitual alcohol consumption contributes to the development of AF. Csengeri and colleagues (2021), conducted a longitudinal study in over 100,000 people to determine what percentage of the population developed AF and related AF to self-reported drinking behavior. Alcohol use--even moderate use--related significantly to incident AF. In contrast, moderate alcohol use was linked to lower risk of incident heart failure.*

[Alcohol, health and cardiovascular disease](#)

**In:** Revista Clínica Española (English Edition), 2021

**By:** J. Masip, & J.R. Germà Lluch

*Alcohol has been part of our lifestyle for many centuries. Oftentimes, caution is urged with alcohol due to its neurotoxic and carcinogenic properties, but other times it is praised for its benefits in reducing risk of myocardial infarction and diabetes.*

## Cont. Publications You May Have Missed

By Andrea Vásquez Ferreiro B.A. and Robert Leeman, Ph.D.

*Masip & Lluch concluded based on their review that alcohol's long-term consequences vary depending on the level of consumption. One needs to differentiate between moderate consumption (approx. <100 g/week) and binge drinking to understand the benefits and drawbacks of alcohol use*

[Interplay of cardiovascular mediators, oxidative stress and inflammation in liver disease and its complications](#)

**In:** Nature Reviews Cardiology, 2021  
**By:** Csaba Matyas, György Haskó, Lucas Liaudet, Eszter Trojnar, & Pal Pacher

*Chronic liver disease relates to other conditions such as cardiac disorders and circulatory complications. There is a connection between the earlier stages of liver disease and cardiovascular dysfunction, which impacts mortality and morbidity. This is a review summarizing the relationship between the organs and their pathologies. For example, cirrhotic cardiomyopathy is found in up to 50% of people with cirrhosis. In other instances, chronic liver disease relates to vascular problems affecting other organs such as the lungs, brain, and kidneys*

[The association of alcohol use with all-cause and cardiovascular disease-related hospitalizations or death in older, high-risk Veterans](#)

**In:** Alcoholism: Clinical and experimental Research, 2021  
**By:** Dan V. Blalock, Janet Grubber, Valerie A. Smith, Donna M. Zulman, Hollis J. Weidenbacher, Liberty Greene, Eric A. Dedert & Matthew L. Maciejewski

*Over the last few years, there has been an increase in alcohol misuse among older adults. The current study looked at hospitalization and death records of high-risk Veterans for all diseases, including cardiovascular disease, over the past six months. Results showed cardiovascular disease-related hospitalization or death rates of almost 2% during that period. Interestingly, in terms of cardiovascular disease risk, there was no difference among Veterans who did not consume alcohol, consumed alcohol in a moderate or an excessive manner. Researchers concluded that the findings did not support an association between cardiovascular disease hospitalizations and alcohol use.*



## New Directions

By Ricardo Pautassi, Ph.D.

The current bulletin is focused on ethanol's effects on cardiovascular function (Piano, 2017). The acute ingestion of alcohol produces a significant, yet short-lasting, increase in heart rate and in blood pressure. These short-term effects, which are greater in those with a positive family history of alcohol problems (Caneto et al., 2018), seem to reflect sensitivity to the motivational effects of alcohol (Conrod et al., 2001) and, thus, are considered markers for risk of alcohol misuse. Chronic alcohol ingestion, in turn, is associated with several negative outcomes on cardiovascular function, including greater risk of hemorrhagic stroke, atrial fibrillation, and heart failure (Larsson et al., 2014; Wood et al., 2018). Beyond these associations, recent epidemiological studies have taken advantage of the known genetic risk for alcoholism, associated with single-nucleotide polymorphisms, to provide evidence for the causal role of high levels of alcohol consumption on increased risk of cardiovascular function, specifically on stroke and peripheral artery disease (Larsson et al., 2020). Recent studies have also focused on other, indirect associations between alcohol use or consequences and cardio-

vascular disease. For instance, a study published a few days ago (Istanbuly et al., 2021) reported that those patients with alcohol-liver disease exhibit a worse prognosis when admitted for percutaneous coronary intervention, than peers not exhibiting such alcohol-related disease. These are just examples of relatively recent, intriguing studies on the interaction between alcohol and cardiovascular function. Readers are encouraged to keep reading the bulletin to immerse into this exciting topic, the key to improving health outcomes.

- Caneto, F., Pautassi, R. M., & Pilatti, A. (2018). Ethanol-induced autonomic responses and risk taking increase in young adults with a positive family history of alcohol problems. *Addict Behav*, 76, 174-181. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2017.08.008>
- Conrod, P., Peterson, J., & Pihl, R. (2001). Reliability and validity of alcohol-induced heart rate increase as a measure of sensitivity to the stimulant properties of alcohol. *Psychopharmacology (Berl)*, 157(1), 20-30. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s002130100741>
- Istanbuly, S., Matetic, A., Mohamed, M. O., Panaich, S., Velagapudi, P., Elgendy, I. Y., Paul, T. K., Alkhoul, M., & Mamas, M. A. (2021). Comparison of Outcomes of Patients With Versus Without Chronic Liver Disease Undergoing Percutaneous Coronary Intervention. *The American Journal of Cardiology*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amjcard.2021.06.044>
- Larsson, S. C., Burgess, S., Mason, A. M., & Michaëlsson, K. (2020). Alcohol Consumption and Cardiovascular Disease. *13(3)*, e002814. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1161/CIRCGEN.119.002814>
- Larsson, S. C., Drca, N., & Wolk, A. (2014). Alcohol consumption and risk of atrial fibrillation: a prospective study and dose-response meta-analysis. *J Am Coll Cardiol*, 64(3), 281-289. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jacc.2014.03.048>
- Piano, M. R. (2017). Alcohol's Effects on the Cardiovascular System. *Alcohol research : current reviews*, 38(2), 219-241. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28988575>
- Wood, A. M. et al. (2018). Risk thresholds for alcohol consumption: combined analysis of individual-participant data for 599 912 current drinkers in 83 prospective studies. *Lancet*, 391(10129), 1513-1523. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736\(18\)30134-x](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736(18)30134-x)

## Funding Opportunities

By Vatsalya Vatsalya, M.D., and Jeffrey Warner M.S.

Further reading and information on funding and some new research initiatives on **Impact of Alcohol Drinking, and Consequences of Alcohol Use Disorder on Cardiovascular Health** can be found below



### 1) National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, USA:

a) Alcohol-induced Tissue-specific and Organ System Diseases: the purpose of this Notice is to inform potential applicants of the NIAAA's special interest in research project applications studying the harmful effects of alcohol on the body's tissues, organs, and systems in diverse populations across the lifespan.

**More information click:**



b) The Stephen I. Katz Early Stage Investigator Research Project Grant supports an innovative project that represents a change in research direction for an early stage investigator and for which no preliminary data exist. Applications submitted to this Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) must not include preliminary data. Applications must include a separate attachment describing the change in research direction. **More info about the two Grants here:**



c) RFA-AA-21-006 and RFA-AA-21-005: These FOAs (P60 and P50 respectively) invite applications for Comprehensive Alcohol Research Centers including the P60 mechanism, which requires a dissemination core to initiate and expand community education related to the activities of the center. These topics include, but are not limited to - the nature, etiology, genetics, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of alcohol use disorder, alcohol-related end organ diseases and their biomedical, psychosocial, and economic consequences across the lifespan and racial/ethnic groups and other health disparity populations.

**More info about the two grants here:**



2) American Heart Association: provides funding on cardiovascular and peripheral system associated disease process, pathologies, etiological explorations, and treatment development. **More information click:**



## Funding Opportunities

By Vatsalya Vatsalya, M.D., and Jeffrey Warner M.S.

### 3) National Institute for Health Research, UK:

-Policy Research Programme - Evaluation of alcohol-free and low-alcohol availability:

The NIHR Policy Research Programme (PRP) invites applications for a research project to monitor and evaluate the impact of Government policy to deliver a significant increase in the availability of alcohol-free and low alcohol products by 2025. The policy covers England only. The research will examine impacts on alcohol consumption, including trends in availability and consumption, behavioural effects, unintended effects and impact on health inequalities.

**More information click:**



## Global Jobs

By Robert Leeman, Ph. D.



### 1) Multiple Tenure Track Faculty Positions Available in Addiction Research:

The University of Connecticut School of Medicine seeks applications for 2 faculty positions in addictions research. The positions are tenure-track with 12-month full salary. Mid- or senior-level PhD or MD applicants are preferred. Active grant-supported research is required. Successful candidates will join an established and growing pool of addiction researchers (e.g., a P50-funded alcohol research center, T32 postdoctoral training program, behavioral health intervention group). The UConn School of Medicine offers a highly competitive benefits package, including a tuition waiver for dependent children for University of Connecticut undergraduate degree programs. For more information, consult [jobs.uconn.edu](http://jobs.uconn.edu) (#'s 2021-892, 2020-428) or contact: Professor Lance Bauer, Ph.D., Alcohol Research Center, University of Connecticut School of Medicine, 263 Farmington Ave., Farmington, CT 06030, Ph: 860-679-4154, [lbauer@uconn.edu](mailto:lbauer@uconn.edu).

## Global Jobs

By Robert Leeman Ph.D.



2) [Director, Office of Science Policy and Communications \(OSPC\): The National Institute on Drug Abuse \(NIDA\)](#) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) is seeking exceptional candidates for the position of Director, Office of Science Policy and Communications (OSPC). OSPC provides leadership in planning, coordinating, analyzing, and evaluating NIDA's scientific research and research training programs; monitors and analyzes scientific, legislative, regulatory, and judicial activities related to the prevention and treatment of substance use disorders; reviews and analyzes national and international policy issues and research findings; and, stimulates interaction and cooperative relations. OSPC also directs the Institute's strategic and scientific planning process and coordinates the articulation of federal policy related to research on drug use and addiction. To learn more about the position, benefits, and application process, please see the full vacancy announcement at <https://hr.nih.gov/jobs/search/executive/job-45306>. Please submit applications by 11:59 P.M. ET on August 20, 2021 (submission date may be extended).

## 3) [Preparing Future Faculty - Faculty Diversity Postdoctoral Program](#)

The University of Missouri's Preparing Future Faculty - Faculty Diversity (PFFFD) Postdoctoral Program is designed to develop scholars for tenure-track faculty positions at the University of Missouri and elsewhere. Applicants should demonstrate how they can contribute to faculty diversity, such as through membership in a group that is historically underrepresented or through other experience and training.

Postdoctoral positions are typically for two years and provide research, teaching, and professional development opportunities. The stipend is a minimum of \$56,000 per year plus University benefits and professional development funds. Some disciplines may provide additional salary commensurate with standards in their field. To be eligible for this program, applicants must have completed their doctoral degree, or expect to complete their degree no later than July 1, 2022. The deadline for applications is 11:59 PM (Central Time), September 27, 2021.

To apply, please create an account in the University of Missouri Graduate School's application system:

<https://applygrad.missouri.edu/apply/?sr=9063670f-4aa3-4799-bc55-83981dc64cc2>

## Global Jobs

By Robert Leeman Ph.D.



4) [Assistant Professor \(Research\) in Medical Humanities:](#) The Institute for Medical Humanities at Durham University in the United Kingdom seeks to appoint an outstanding early career researcher specializing in the interdisciplinary study of anxiety to the fixed-term role of Assistant Professor (Research). Applications are invited from scholars of any social science or humanities discipline who have experience or are willing to engage in empirical qualitative research on anxiety or closely related topics. Apply at <https://www.dur.ac.uk/jobs/>

5) [Open Rank Assistant/Associate/Full Professor University of Illinois-Chicago:](#) The Department of Psychiatry of the University of Illinois at Chicago is seeking a basic and/or translational neuroscientist with an interest in the behavioral and neurobiological aspects of stress, depression, and resilience. Applicants must apply online at <http://jobs.uic.edu> and reference Job ID #149953. For fullest consideration, applicants must submit their applications, a CV, cover letter, and three letters of recommendation by September 30, 2021. The application review process will start immediately and will continue until the search close date of October 28, 2021.

6) [Assistant, Associate, or Full Professor, Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences:](#)

The Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University School of Medicine is seeking new full-time Professoriate faculty members at the rank of Assistant, Associate, or full Professor in the University Medical Line. These are positions for clinician scientists specializing in mental health and based in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, or at the Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System with presence in the Departmental programs on the Stanford campus. Interested candidates should send a copy of their curriculum vitae, a brief letter outlining their experiences and interests and the names of three references via e-mail only to:  
Search Chair: Alan Louie, M.D., c/o Heather Kenna  
Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences  
Stanford University School of Medicine  
401 Quarry Road  
Stanford, CA 94305  
Phone: (650) 724-0521 | Email: [hkenna@stanford.edu](mailto:hkenna@stanford.edu)





## News and Events

by Shilpa Chokshi Ph.D., Antonio Riva Ph.D. and Elena Palma Ph.D.

### News:

#### **2022 ISBRA Tabakoff Award for excellence in Biomedical Research on Alcoholism**

*Deadline for Nominations:* January 31, 2022

All ISBRA members in good standing are invited to nominate for this award individuals who have contributed to any aspect of biomedical research on alcoholism (basic and preclinical, translational and clinical work, genetics, and epidemiology).

The 2022 ISBRA Tabakoff Award recipient will be announced and invited to present a plenary lecture at the joint ISBRA/ESBRA Congress held in Cracow (Poland) between September 17-20, 2022.

Past recipients of the ISBRA Tabakoff Award are Prof Markus Heilig (Sweden) in 2012 and Prof Yedy Israel (Chile) in 2020/21\*.

\* Due to COVID-19, the 2020 award was officially acknowledged in June 2021 during the ISBRA/RSA Virtual Conference.

Find more information on the ISBRA webpage:

<http://www.isbra.com/awards/tabakoff/>

#### **The Helmut Seitz Award of The European Society for Biomedical Research on Alcoholism 2021**

*Deadline for Nominations/Applications:*  
August 31, 2021

The Helmut Seitz Award, formerly known as the Manfred Lautenschläger Award, is donated by the Manfred Lautenschläger Foundation and consists of 25,000 EURO. The Award will be granted to a well-established alcohol researcher who has contributed strongly to the understanding of alcohol-related and alcohol-associated diseases or the development of treatment strategies in alcohol-associated diseases. The recipient of the Award must have devoted most of their academic and research career to alcohol research.

The Helmut Seitz Award 2021 recipient will be announced at the 18th ESBRA congress 2021, held in Timisoara (Romania) between October 7-9, 2021. Potential awardees can be either nominated by ESBRA members or directly apply.

Find more information on the ESBRA webpage:

<https://www.esbra.com/awards/the-helmut-seitz-award-of-the-european-society-for-biomedical-research-on-alcoholism>

## Cont. News and Events

by Shilpa Chokshi Ph.D., Antonio Riva Ph.D. and Elena Palma Ph.D.

### Research News:

#### 1) **New Public Health Report on steep rise in alcohol consumption and alcohol-related deaths during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

The latest report published by Public Health England (PHE) earlier this summer shows incontrovertible evidence that alcohol consumption has significantly increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, causing a steep rise in alcohol-related deaths. It is likely that similar trends may be observed in several countries, but detailed international reports are still eagerly awaited.

The following are, in summary, the findings presented by PHE.

- Overall, purchase of alcoholic drinks remained the same or increased compared to pre-pandemic levels, despite national lockdown measures, and mostly due to off-trade sales. Consumer surveys and reports indicated a definite increment in the amount of alcohol consumed compared to pre-pandemic levels, which was mostly attributable to those who were already heavier alcohol purchasers before the beginning of the pandemic.
- "Between March 2020 and March 2021, there was a 58.6% increase in the proportion of respondents

drinking at increasing risk and higher risk levels. Importantly, this data shows a step-change around the time the pandemic began, where the prevalence of increasing risk and higher risk drinking increased and then continued to be higher than previous years throughout the pandemic year."

- Unplanned hospital admissions for alcohol-specific causes showed a mild decrease compared to pre-pandemic, in line with the decrease in unplanned hospital admission for any cause as observed from the beginning of the pandemic (lockdown effect). Amongst alcohol-specific unplanned admissions, only those for alcohol-related liver disease showed a steep increase from the beginning of the pandemic.
- Total alcohol-specific deaths were up to 20% higher in 2020 compared to 2019, especially after May 2020 coinciding around the peak time of the first COVID-19 wave in England. Up to 80% of these increased alcohol-specific deaths can be assigned to alcohol-related liver disease, consistent with the pattern of "increases in alcohol consumption mainly affecting the heaviest drinkers in the most deprived areas" identified through customer surveys and reports. Alcohol-specific deaths remained significantly higher than baseline data regardless of the up-down trends of the different COVID-19 waves.

Please follow these links to access the PHE Report:



## Cont. News and Events

by Shilpa Chokshi Ph.D., Antonio Riva Ph.D. and Elena Palma Ph.D.

### Cont. Research News:

**2) Alcohol consumption still dominates amongst possible causes of cancer:** A new population-based study recently published in Lancet Oncology reconfirms heavy or risky alcohol consumption as one of the key drivers of the global burden of cancer in 2020.

Globally, about 4.1% of all new cases of cancer in 2020 were attributable to alcohol consumption. About three-quarters of alcohol-attributable cancer cases were in males, and the cancer sites contributing the most attributable cases were oesophageal, liver, and breast (in females). Eastern Asia and Central/Eastern Europe were the geographical areas where these proportions were higher.

Given the observed steep rise in alcohol consumption during the COVID-19 pandemic, these findings bring to the fore the need to investigate early predictors of cancer development.



### **3) Alcohol consumption and alcohol-related liver disease show strong socio-economic inequalities in Denmark:** A

recent nationwide registry-based study published in Lancet Regional Health Europe shows strong associations between alcohol-related liver disease (ALD) patterns and socio-economic status in Denmark. The burden of ALD was found to be greater in population strata with lower educational levels and higher unemployment rates. Of interest, these relative differences were comparable regardless of age and gender. Given the multifactorial aspects of alcohol consumption and its multifaceted consequences, it would be relevant to understand the trajectory of the observed associations, particularly when considering that predictive analyses in this paper indicated that differences in employment rates could be identified up to 10 years prior to ALD diagnosis. These findings confirm previously identified associations between alcohol consumption and socioeconomic status; however, this research benefitted from a nationwide registry-based approach, which is more likely to include population groups that may normally fail to report during survey-based investigations. The relevance of these findings for public health purposes, early identification of at-risk groups and preventive interventions is unquestionable.



## Cont. News and Events

by Shilpa Chokshi Ph.D., Antonio Riva Ph.D. and Elena Palma Ph.D.

### Past Events

#### 1) International Liver Congress™ 2021 (EASL, European Association for the Study of the Liver)

*When: June 23–26, 2021*

*Where: online*

The International Liver Congress organized by EASL is the flagship European congress for “anything” liver and included symposia, sessions and several high-quality posters and presentations focused on alcohol-related liver disease and its complications.

This year’s congress Post-Graduate Course was dedicated to “Lifestyle & the liver”, while the topic for the Basic Science Seminar was “Artificial intelligence, ‘omics’ & big data in liver research”.

Scientific programme:



Selected accessible summary content on alcohol-related liver disease:



On-demand content (for EASL members):



### Upcoming events :

#### 18th European Society for Biomedical Research on Alcoholism (ESBRA) Congress

*When: October 7–9, 2021*

*Where: Timisoara, Romania*

*Deadline for Abstract submission: September 5, 2021*

ESBRA promotes European medical and biological research on alcoholism and alcohol-related diseases and fosters scientific cooperation amongst its members.

The biannual congress with the latest updates and results on European alcohol-related biomedical research will be held this year in Timisoara (Romania) between October 7–9. The congress will also include a postgraduate course on Alcoholism and Alcohol-related Disorders. Among the keynote speakers, renowned international experts will present, including Gyongyi Szabo, Philippe Mathurin, Lorenzo Leggio, Massimo Pinzani, Rainer Spanagel and Marco Diana.

Find more information on the ESBRA Conference webpage:



## Cont. News and Events

by Shilpa Chokshi Ph.D., Antonio Riva Ph.D. and Elena Palma Ph.D.

### **2021 Gordon Research Conference (GRC) on Alcohol-Induced End Organ Diseases: Developing Molecular Pathways into Therapeutic Opportunities for Alcohol-Associated Diseases**

*When: October 24-29, 2021*

*Where: Ventura, CA, US*

*Deadline for Applications: September 26, 2021*

The 2021 Gordon Research Conference will provide a unique international forum to bring together a diverse range of young and established scientists who are studying Alcohol-induced end organ disorders. Cutting edge research on alcohol-induced tissue injury will be the exclusive focus of this conference with particular emphasis on translational and therapeutic approaches.

Chairs: Gyongyi Szabo and Bernd Schnabl

Vice Chairs: Elizabeth J. Kovacs and Gavin E. Arteel

Find more information on the Conference webpage:



## Call for papers

*Dr Ricardo M Pautassi* (National University of Córdoba, Argentina) is leading a new Special Issue of The American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse (AJDAA, 2020 Impact Factor: 3.829), with the help of Guest Editors Drs Terrence Deak and Anny Gano (Binghamton University-State University of New York, USA), dedicated to "Drug or alcohol-induced neuroinflammation: insights from pre-clinical models and clinical research". Neuroinflammation involves the activation of the brain's innate immune system and is characterized by a host of adaptive responses, including mobilization and activation of microglia and other glial cells and the subsequent release of cytokines, chemokines, and other molecules. Inflammation-related signaling in the CNS fluctuates across cycles of drug use and misuse, and have been implicated in neural plasticity-like changes that portend the development of Substance Use Disorders (SUDs).

More in detail, this Special Issue seeks clinical and preclinical original research or reviews broadly addressing the role of inflammatory-related processes in drug use and misuse.

## **Cont. News and Events**

by Shilpa Chokshi Ph.D., Antonio Riva Ph.D. and Elena Palma Ph.D.

### **Cont. Call for papers**

Submissions in the following areas are of particular interest, but not limited to these topics only:

- Parametric studies that critically evaluate the role of age (perinatal, adolescent, adult, or aging-related), sex, and other environmental variables (conditioned responses) on neuroinflammatory processes provoked by psychoactive drugs;
- Mechanistic studies on cellular, molecular, and behavioral mechanisms by which alcohol or other drugs influence neuroinflammatory processes, and how they pertain to addictive processes or its long-term health consequences;
- Pharmacological studies targeting inflammatory-signaling pathways and their potential use as therapeutics in SUDs;
- Genetic studies implicating inflammatory processes in the development and/or expression of SUDs;
- Intersectional studies on poly drug use and potential additive/synergistic effects on neuroinflammatory processes; and,

● Studies of SUDs and associated co-morbidities (e.g., anxiety, depression, etc.) that point toward neuroinflammatory processes as a common underlying mechanism. The role of traditional molecular (e.g., activation of innate immune receptors such the toll-like-receptor) or cellular underpinnings of neuroinflammation will be welcomed; as well as manuscripts assessing or reviewing pharmacological or environmental tools to ameliorate drug-induced neuroinflammation or its consequences.

Timeline for submission and publication: Manuscripts may be submitted between August 1 2021 and April 1st 2022, via this journal's ScholarOne manuscript submission system at: <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/lada>.

Manuscripts will be published as online-only after acceptance and collected in a hard copy special issue that will be published in November, 2022.

For more information, please contact the Senior Editor Dr Ricardo M Pautassi at:

[ricardo.pautassi@unc.edu.ar](mailto:ricardo.pautassi@unc.edu.ar) or  
[ricardo.pautassi@theajdaa.com](mailto:ricardo.pautassi@theajdaa.com)

## Interview with a Scientist

By Rosana Camarini Ph.D.

Dr. Gyongyi Szabo



alcohol on innate immunity or on the effects of moderate drinking or binge drinking on tissue-specific immune responses and inflammation. I thought that based on my interest and expertise in monocyte-macrophage biology and innate immunity I could contribute new discoveries in this field.

**What were the challenges you found during the early stage of your career as a scientist, and how did you overcome that?**

Similar to other early-stage investigators, I found it challenging to find my “niche”. I was lucky that my mentor, Dr. Carol Miller-Graziano, was instrumental in directing me to the alcohol field. Building on my post-doctoral research that focused on cytokines in post-trauma immunosuppression, I was fortunate to receive an NIH career development grant to study the effects of alcohol on immune functions in healthy individuals and post-trauma. This grant provided 50% of my salary and a postdoc to start my independent lab. I focused on the effects of alcohol on monocyte and dendritic cell functions in humans that became an exciting and impactful area of research.

**How did your interest grow in the area of alcohol research?**

As a junior scientist who was trained in immunology, I participated at one of the initial Alcohol Immunology meetings and was struck by how little was known on the effects of alcohol on immunity. We knew that alcoholics have increased immunoglobulin levels and clinical observations suggested increased susceptibility to infections. Most studies focused on changes in immune cell populations, phenotypes, and cytokine levels but little was known about the effects of

## Interview with a Scientist

By Rosana Camarini Ph.D.

Dr. Gyongyi Szabo

### **What were the benchmark studies (bench to bedside and vice versa) that caught your attention during your career in alcohol research?**

Being an immunologist and hepatologist, I found early studies from Craig McClain on cytokine increases in patients with alcoholic hepatitis really fascinating. While my initial studies focused on the effects of alcohol on human immune cells, antigen presentation, and regulatory pathways of inflammation, I realized that in order to perform *in vivo* mechanistic studies, we need to establish animal models. Studies from the late Ron Thurman's group described fascinating findings in alcohol-related macrophage activation that provided the basis for many more studies in years to come. Anna Mae Diehl's studies on alcohol and liver regeneration were groundbreaking and informed our future studies. In learning about different alcohol administration models in mice, we closely followed the fascinating work of the late Charlie Lieber, Sam French, and Hide Tsukamoto.



### **How do you foresee the direction of alcohol research in the coming decades?**

What I and many of us learned over the years in alcohol research is that alcohol affects (probably) all cell types in the body and all organs. As we learn more details at the cellular and molecular level on alcohol's effects, it is striking how many similarities exist in signaling pathways and molecular response patterns to alcohol between different organs.

This lends some optimism about potential treatment options. Another fascinating area in alcohol research is the discovery of organ interactions. The gut-liver axis being a major determinant of alcohol-induced inflammation and recent discoveries on gut-brain, liver, and lung interactions will expand our views in assessing the overall health effects of alcohol use. I am optimistic that future studies will bring success to treatments that prevent organ damage and/or addiction.



## **Interview with a Scientist**

By Rosana Camarini Ph.D.

**Several cellular and molecular targets and mechanisms have been investigated in preclinical studies of AUD, however, with little success for clinical translation. What are the main obstacles between preclinical and clinical studies in AUD?**

Investigations in the last decade resulted in high-quality studies that identified numerous key molecules and signaling pathways in alcohol-induced organ damage and addiction. Preclinical studies in animal models indicate that there are several potentially effective therapeutic interventions to improve or at least attenuate alcohol-induced organ damage. Selection between these potential therapeutic targets and translation of this knowledge to human therapy will be the next milestone for our field. To reach such a milestone, our field has to overcome multiple barriers. First, patients and families with alcohol use disorders or alcohol-induced organ effects are not prepared to participate in clinical trials. This might be related to social stigma and mostly to the lack of education of patients about the great power of clinical research.

**Dr. Gyongyi Szabo**

Second, other than the NIAAA, very few pharmaceutical companies are interested in supporting human clinical trials that can be very costly. The perception is that patients with alcohol use disorder or alcohol-induced organ effects are not reliable, which makes adherence to treatment and follow-ups challenging. I am optimistic that with collaborative efforts such as the currently ongoing AlcHepNet consortium supported by NIAAA, we can serve our patients with alcohol-use disorders better in the future.

**What is the take-home message you want to convey to the young investigators?**

Alcohol research is extremely rewarding and promises great returns if we think about how many lives are affected. Early-stage investigators should follow their passion for science and discovery toward solutions that will help our patients and society in mitigating alcohol-use disorders and organ effects.



**Conference Report: RSA –  
ISBRA Congress 2021 44th  
annual Virtual Meeting  
By Richa Singhal Ph.D.**

The Research Society on Alcoholism (RSA) conducted its 44th international annual conference virtually from June 19th to June 23rd, 2021. This event was in partnership with the International Society for Biomedical Research on Alcoholism (ISBRA); and was partly funded by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA). The conference was attended by scientists, medical doctors, students, and participants from 28 countries worldwide, involved in various fields of research associated with alcoholism and alcohol-related comorbidities. The conference included 1440 presentations including posters, virtual presentations, diversity workshops, RSA lecture series on alcohol research and development, plenary and satellite interactive sessions, educational tracks, keynote speakers, exhibitors; and job openings for faculty, researchers, and postdoctoral trainees.

The conference also hosted the 15th Annual Charles Lieber; and 1st Annual Samuel French Satellite on Alcohol, COVID-19, Viruses, Experimental and Clinical Research. Talks highlighted on Twitter, Facebook, and in press releases covered topics on i) alcohol consumption in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in the USA and other countries, ii) the influence of social network sites on adult binge drinking behavior, iii) alcohol and cannabis co-use patterns among regular cannabis users and treatment-seeking heavy drinkers, iv) technologies to monitor mechanisms of recovery during early treatment for alcohol use disorder (AUD), v) adolescent stress exposure and alcohol use, vi) increasing access to pharmacotherapy and specialty treatment for alcohol problems and vii) neurofunctional characteristics associated with psychotherapy outcomes in individuals with comorbid posttraumatic stress and AUD.

### **Cont. Conference Report By Richa Singhal Ph.D.**

Additionally, one of the key webinars hosted by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and NIAAA was “Innovations in Treating Stress & Trauma in Women with Alcohol Use Disorder, and Women living with HIV”. Key exhibitors at the conference were BACtrack, Sober Grid, BioRealm Genomics, Artificial intelligence, United States Drug testing laboratories, Texas Tech University, and NIAAA.

Registrants can access the virtual RSA-ISBRA platform until August 31st, 2021.

Non-registrants can also access the platform by registering for the conference.





# The International Society for Biomedical Research on Alcoholism BULLETIN

*Contributing to the advancement of alcohol research globally*

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