

Lay Supplement No. 14

WHAT PEOPLE DO
ABOUT ALCOHOL
PROBLEMS

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QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF STUDIES ON ALCOHOL

The Lay Supplements Series

1. The Problems of Alcohol
2. The Nature of Alcoholic Beverages and the Extent of their Use
3. Alcohol and Industrial Efficiency
4. Facts on Delirium Tremens
5. Alcohol, Heredity and Germ Damage
6. Alcohol and Length of Life
7. What Happens to Alcohol in the Body
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14. What People Do About Alcohol Problems

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RECORDS of early human history reveal that people even then drank alcoholic beverages—beers and wines. They tell also that along with this drinking went public problems, the foremost being drunkenness.*

When people discovered that large amounts of these beverages could make them drunk they were faced by a problem about which they had to do something. Many ways have been tried in all places and times to curb excessive drinking. Examples are: talking about it in a manner that condemns it as wrong; calling those who get drunk bad names; punishing the drunken person, often by imprisonment; and training children to drink in a proper way, or not to drink at all. All these ways are still practiced today. Our most popular way of dealing with those who appear drunk in public is making them pay a fine or putting them in jail.

Since olden times the rulers and leaders of different lands and peoples have tried to solve the problems connected with alcoholic beverages by making laws. They regulated who might drink how much of what, and where and when to drink it. Sometimes drinking was forbidden altogether.

Hammurabi, King of Chaldea more than 4,000 years ago, made the following laws, among others: The price of six measures of beer was fixed at five measures of grain. The keeper of a tavern who sheltered outlaws was subject to the penalty of death. And a priestess who visited a drinking place was likewise to be killed.

The laws for the control of drinking did not always work out the way their makers hoped they would. As a result, such regulations tended to be numerous and often changed.

Not only civil governments made laws about drinking. Religious groups and other associations—for instance, athletic or scholarly societies—also felt a need to adopt drinking rules. The Greeks of Sparta, 2,500 years ago, allowed a young man not more than about a pint of wine daily. In Judaea, 2,000 years ago, a Jewish religious sect, the Essenes, forbade all drinking to its members, while the main religious body regulated, for example, the cups of wine that might be given to a mourner to ease his sorrow. In Japan, over 1,000 years ago, the Emperor Shomu twice prohibited the making of alcoholic beverages in an

*A detailed discussion of what the various problems of alcohol are is given in another pamphlet in the present series.

effort to meet crises caused by famines or epidemics. In Europe in the Middle Ages the religious orders had strict rules against clergymen spending too much time in taverns. And excess in drinking by anyone was an offense that the church could punish.

The interest of modern governments in alcoholic beverages takes two main directions: One is to prevent drunkenness and alcoholism, and the dangers and disorders connected with them—rowdyism, violent crime, accidents, disease, loss of earning power, broken homes and so forth. The other is to obtain revenue, funds with which to meet the expenses of government, or to foster agriculture and industry.

CONTROLS OF DRINKING AND DRUNKENNESS

ALMOST anywhere we might go, getting drunk will be regarded as an offense, punishable by a fine or imprisonment. Civil laws of this type grew directly out of the older religious laws which regarded getting drunk as immoral.

But it was not enough to make drunkenness unlawful. In the hope of preventing it, governments have also tried all sorts of regulations of the trade in alcoholic beverages. These are far too many, and too varied from place to place, to be listed even in a big volume. Only a few examples can be cited here.

One of the most common laws is that the seller of alcoholic beverages must have a license to engage in this business. Usually such licenses may be issued only to citizens of good character. This is intended to insure obedience to the regulations.

In the United States the sale of liquor to minors is forbidden in all states, but a "minor" is not always the same thing. Others who have been barred as liquor customers at one time or another are Indians, known drunkards, women, paupers, soldiers, college students and the insane. These laws recognize that the careless distribution of alcohol will lead to trouble. They thus attempt to keep it from those who are not considered able to judge between proper and improper use, or those for whom it is supposed to be specially dangerous.

It is not usual nowadays to fix by rule the price of a measure of drink, as they did in Chaldea in ancient times, and in England and America as recently as a few hundred years ago. But in some states a government board sets the price at which it will sell liquor to the public; and in others, the manufacturer may set a minimum price at which his brand of beverage may be retailed. Such price fixing is legal for liquor even

where it would be illegal for, say, furniture or candy. This exception is based on the belief that price competition for the sale of liquor would be harmful to the public interest.

A particular concern nowadays is the problem of the automobile driver who is drunk or has taken enough drinks to reduce his efficiency at the wheel. More and more states are passing laws fixing the amounts of alcohol in the blood of a driver which should be regarded as definitely or possibly unsafe. And more and more police departments are using chemical tests to measure the alcohol in an accused driver's body. Thus a scientific tool, instead of the opinion of bystanders or a police officer, decides whether alcohol had a part in a traffic violation or accident. It is believed that as the use and understanding of chemical tests for this purpose spreads, the problem of alcohol and traffic will decline.

Countless laws govern the public places where drinking is done. In some communities the tavern may not have its windows shuttered, or it may not have booths. In some states women may not be served drinks at the bar, but only when seated at a table; in others, women may drink at the bar if seated on stools, though the men may stand. In some localities the bar must provide food as well as drinks. In others, the place that sells drinks is not permitted to serve meals.

Communities generally regulate the hours when public drinking places may be open. Closing on Sunday or Sunday morning, on election day and on some holidays is a widespread requirement. Definite nightly closing hours are also usual, but the exact time varies from locality to locality. Other rules may prohibit gambling, or the presence of women without escorts, or entertainment. Still others deal with the location of the drinking place—it may be forbidden, for example, within a certain distance of a school or church.

These laws stem mostly from the ideas of people in different places as to what is likely to foster safe limits and orderly behavior in drinking. It is not surprising that there are so many differences of opinion as to what regulations are best suited for this purpose. One thing that has not been done, thus far, is to carry out systematic studies of the actual effects of different regulations.

PROHIBITION

ONE type of law with a long history is prohibition. Many societies at different times have thought the best way to solve all the problems connected with drinking would be to do away with alcoholic beverages

altogether. But prohibition did not always abolish the old troubles and often brought new problems of its own. It has often been given up after trial.

In the United States, prohibition laws were adopted in 13 of the 31 states in the early 1850's, but in 1863 only one still kept it. In the 1880's prohibition was tried again in a number of states, but again most of them gave it up. In the present century, a strong drive for prohibition resulted in a majority of states adopting it by 1917. This effort culminated in the passage of the 18th Amendment to the Constitution in 1919, with nationwide prohibition starting in 1920. But national prohibition also brought new problems. These, along with other events, led to the 21st Amendment in 1933, by which the control of alcoholic beverages was returned to the individual states.

SINCE REPEAL

ALL states now permit the sale of at least some alcoholic beverages under one of two leading systems.

The Monopoly System.—In about a third of the states, the state itself sells the liquor through government-operated stores. This is called a monopoly system. But there is no uniform way of conducting the state monopolies. In most, beer is allowed to be sold by private license-holders. In some, the state monopoly allows certain private agents to assist it in the sale of liquors to the public. In many, restaurants and hotels are licensed to sell liquors by the drink, while sale by the bottle is restricted to the state stores or agencies. These states usually have a board or commission which conducts and controls the distribution of alcoholic beverages.

The states which have some form of monopoly are:

Alabama	New Hampshire	Vermont
Idaho	North Carolina	Virginia
Iowa	Ohio	Washington
Maine	Oregon	West Virginia
Michigan	Pennsylvania	Wyoming
Montana	Utah	

The License System.—The majority of states have adopted a system of licensing private merchants to sell alcoholic beverages. These states usually have a special board which issues licenses, makes regulations, and enforces the rules. In a few states this work is carried out by one of the regular departments of government—mostly the tax-collecting department. In many of the states, licenses to operate taverns or liquor

stores are issued by local authorities only, or by the state body only after approval by the local authorities.

The 29 states which have a license system are all those not listed above, except Mississippi and Oklahoma.

State Prohibition and Local Option.—In Mississippi and Oklahoma, only beer and wines containing not more than 3.2 per cent alcohol by weight (4 per cent by volume) may be sold. These two states thus very nearly prohibit all alcoholic beverages, and are generally listed as having prohibition. Beverages containing only 3.2 per cent alcohol are not considered to be intoxicating by some authorities, as a man would have to drink huge amounts of fluid at a time to reach an alcohol level in the blood which would cause intoxication.

Most of the states have local option laws. These allow the people of various localities—counties, cities, towns, villages—to vote whether they want the sale of alcoholic beverages in their community, or under what conditions they will permit what kinds of beverages. By local option, more than a sixth of the nation's population lives in areas having some form of prohibition. In these places either no alcoholic beverages at all may be sold or only beer is permitted, or beer and light wines.

All but 10 of the states have laws providing for some form of local option. The exceptions are: Arizona, California, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Nevada, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina and Wyoming.

Local option referendums are held often in many places. In some they are required by state law to be repeated regularly. Changes in community policy are thus tried from time to time.

TAXES

TRYING to limit drinking to a moderate and orderly scale is not the only interest of government. The other leading concern is revenue. Governments found out long ago that alcohol lends itself easily to taxation. In this it is similar to tobacco. Indeed, certain of the control laws—for instance, the requirement to have a license to make or sell alcoholic beverages—may have been passed in the first place as a means of raising revenue rather than to insure good order. There is always a fee to be paid for a license. The licensing laws, however, have been used also as a means of keeping persons of ill repute out of the trade.

In this country, Federal, state and local governments all impose taxes on alcoholic beverages. There are license fees for manufacture and for sale at wholesale or retail. In addition, each barrel of beer and gallon

of wine or spirits is taxed by the Federal Government at the place of manufacture, and by state and local governments at the place of manufacture, sale or distribution. In the monopoly states, the state government collects its "tax" on liquor in the amount it charges the buyer above its costs.

In one recent year (1953) the Federal Government collected \$2,819,480,000 in direct taxes on alcoholic beverages. The state governments in the same year collected another \$820,000,000, and local governments about \$100,000,000 more. Many states allot some of the revenue from alcoholic beverages for special public welfare uses, as schools, old age pensions, relief of the poor, or help for the blind. A few states set aside a small portion of these receipts for the treatment of alcoholics and for education and research on alcoholism.

The large amounts collected from alcoholic beverages have become an important item in public income, and thus may influence the policies of the governments. Indeed, some think that lawmakers give too much thought to the question of how much tax money they can raise from alcoholic beverages, and too little attention to other problems connected with their sale and use. The alcoholic-beverage industry, in particular, points to the high taxes on its products as allowing so large a margin of profit to "moonshiners" (illegal makers of liquor)—who, of course, avoid the taxes—that bootlegging is encouraged. This may increase other forms of crime which tend to go with bootlegging. The industry maintains, too, that because of the high taxes, so much "moonshine" is now being sold that the government is even losing revenue.

VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS

GOVERNMENTS are not the only means by which groups of people try to work out the problems of alcohol. Various associations in which membership is voluntary, including many religious denominations or societies, have been active in this field.

The Temperance Organizations.—In the United States, early in the 19th century, a large number of temperance societies came into being with the aim of bringing about a more moderate use of alcoholic beverages. They were especially concerned with the problem of strong spirits. The churches encouraged and gave leadership to this work. The temperance societies flourished, gained a large following, and became a strong moral force on the American scene.

From about 1836 on, these societies began to favor total abstinence

rather than temperate drinking. This change of program caused some members to withdraw, as they did not consider it proper to call moderate drinking of mild alcoholic beverages intemperate. But the new policy won out in the movement, so that the temperance pledge of the membership became the "teetotal pledge," to abstain completely from all alcoholic beverages. The word temperance came to have a recognized meaning of abstinence in addition to its meaning of moderation.

The temperance societies pressed for laws to restrict the trade in alcoholic beverages and even to abolish it. They had the support of many churches, especially those that require abstinence as a rule of conduct. These societies were influential in getting prohibition adopted in many states, and later in getting the 18th Amendment adopted. At present they take the lead in movements for prohibition by local option, for the prohibition of liquor advertising, and for all other restrictions on alcoholic beverages. They meet with opposition from three sources: citizens who believe the right to drink moderately should not be interfered with; those who consider the troubles of prohibition to be worse than the troubles connected with the legal sale of alcoholic beverages; and the beverage industry.

The temperance societies, however, do not occupy themselves only with laws and regulations. Most of them carry on educational activities in favor of abstinence, and they publish a large amount of literature about the evils of alcohol and drinking. These organizations, in particular the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, are credited with getting the laws adopted requiring alcohol education in the schools.

IMPARTIAL ACTIVITIES

THE activities of the temperance societies are based on the conviction that anything connected with alcohol is bad. Some people believe, however, that many alcohol problems can be solved only through an impartial approach, which takes into account the viewpoints of those who hold that not all drinking is bad.

The Committee of Fifty.—One of the first attempts at an impartial, fact-finding or scientific approach to alcohol problems in the United States was the work of the Committee of Fifty. This group of leading citizens, toward the end of the 19th century, supported and carried out a series of studies in the field of alcohol problems. Their findings were published in several volumes about 50 years ago.

The Yale Center of Alcohol Studies.—In recent times the Yale Center

of Alcohol Studies was established within the Laboratory of Applied Physiology at Yale University. This Center maintains a full-time staff of specialists engaged in the following activities:

1. *Research.* This is carried on in the social field as well as in the laboratory and clinic. The aim of research is to discover basic facts about alcohol, about its effects on man and on society, and about the problems which grow not just out of alcohol or drinking but out of human beings and what they seek in drinking.

2. *Publications.* These range from technical books to popular pamphlets. Their aim is to make the facts known so that citizens can use them in working to solve alcohol problems.

3. *Education.* This is done in an annual Summer School of Alcohol Studies on the graduate level, through the giving of lectures, and by the preparation of films and other special materials.

4. *Therapy.* This is carried out in the Yale Plan Clinic for the diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of alcoholics and is closely tied up with research on alcoholism.

5. *Special Services.* These consist of surveys for government agencies or private organizations, the planning of programs of education and treatment for industries, and the supply of information about alcohol problems from the special reference sources maintained at the Center.

The keynote of the activities of the Yale Center of Alcohol Studies is the scientific method. This means an objective—impartial—approach to every problem. A unique feature is the teamwork of scientists from many special fields: physiology, psychology, clinical medicine, social science, education, law, economics, and others.

Research on various alcohol problems is being carried out also in laboratories and social science departments at other universities in the United States and in many hospitals and clinics. For the most part these studies are concerned with alcoholism and its diseases.

ALCOHOLISM

In the last two decades, the attention of citizen groups has focused especially on the problem of alcoholism. This interest has led to a new concern about the alcoholic by governments as well. As a result, the effort to tackle alcoholism as a public health problem has grown to nation-wide size in recent years.

Before describing what people are doing about alcoholism, it is necessary to note what this term means. Alcoholism does not mean

drinking. Nor does it mean simply getting drunk sometimes, whether by accident or on purpose. The alcoholic, the person who has the disorder called alcoholism, is one who repeatedly drinks more than is customary for people in his community, and moreover, he drinks to the extent that it injures his health or his social or family life, or interferes with his economic welfare. In the United States there are about 3,800,000 alcoholics, one-sixth of them women. In Canada there are about 135,000 alcoholics, one out of eight being women. This large number of persons with a disorder of behavior which harms them, their families and society, and which they cannot overcome unless helped, makes a serious public health problem. What is more, about one out of four of the alcoholics in the United States has some medical complication of alcoholism—a bodily or mental disorder connected with excessive drinking.

Alcoholism shows itself mainly—and in the early stages of the disease, often only—in the behavior of the alcoholic: he drinks until he is drunk. This looks like misbehaving on purpose. It is thus not surprising that alcoholism has been treated in the past in the same way as the occasional rowdy drunkenness of people who are not alcoholics. In other words, it was treated as a breach of the peace, an offense against public order, and punished by fine or short imprisonment.

Along with the growing knowledge that the alcoholic is a person with an illness, and that few alcoholics can stop drinking without treatment, new policies have come into being.

THE STATE PROGRAMS

THE work of the Yale Plan Clinic, started in 1944 by the Yale Laboratory of Applied Physiology, showed that many alcoholics could be helped at little expense. The cost to the community of allowing alcoholism to go untreated was much higher. This stimulated the legislature of the State of Connecticut in 1945 to establish a Commission on Alcoholism. The commission was given the duty of setting up clinics in several parts of the state where alcoholics could be treated by physicians, psychologists, social workers, and others able to deal with their disorder and problems. To support this work, a fixed percentage of the state's yearly receipts from liquor license fees was set aside. The commission was also directed to carry on research and public education about alcoholism, and to seek and develop means of preventing it.

This was the beginning of a new movement in tackling the problem

of alcoholism. Within 10 years a majority of the states had taken definite steps in the same direction. Many of them already have permanent agencies active in treating and rehabilitating alcoholics; and in conducting programs of research and public information. These agencies may be divided into two classes.

1. *Special Agencies.* These consist of special bodies appointed as independent units of the state government, for the sole purpose of carrying out a program on alcoholism, including treatment, rehabilitation, research, public education and prevention. The states in this class are:

Alabama	Kansas	New Mexico
California	Louisiana	Texas
Colorado	Michigan	Utah
Connecticut	North Dakota	Vermont
Georgia		

2. *Integrated Agencies.* In many other states, the task of developing a program on alcoholism has been assigned to one of the existing agencies of government. In some cases it is the department of health, in others the department of mental hygiene, or welfare, or hospitals. The states in this class are:

Delaware	Minnesota	Pennsylvania
Florida	New Hampshire	Rhode Island
Indiana	New Jersey	South Carolina
Maine	New York	Virginia
Maryland	North Carolina	Wisconsin
Massachusetts	Oregon	

Besides these states, the District of Columbia has a program on alcoholism within the District department of health.

The majority of the state agencies in these two classes have made provisions for the treatment of alcoholics in clinics and hospitals. They also engage in public education by arranging conferences, schools for specialists, and lectures; by publishing pamphlets, booklets or periodicals; by sponsoring radio and television features and film exhibitions; by providing factual literature to libraries or directly to the public; and by sending various specialists to attend the Yale Summer School of Alcohol Studies.

A number of states do not have as broad a program of activity on alcoholism as those in the first two classes but do have laws which provide for the treatment of alcoholics in the state mental hospitals. These laws are intended particularly to take care of alcoholics who are not

mentally ill. The states in this class are Arkansas, Illinois, Mississippi, Nebraska and Nevada.

In some of the states without programs at this time, commissions are studying the problem and will submit their reports before long. In some, recommendations are awaiting action by the legislature. Thus it is likely that by the time this booklet reaches its readers, more states should be added to the preceding lists.

Some of the state programs on alcoholism, and that in the District of Columbia, are supported by an allotted portion of the revenue from alcoholic beverages. The others are financed by funds voted every year or two by the state legislature.

OTHER GOVERNMENTS

The Federal Government.—The program of the District of Columbia, similar to that of many states with an integrated agency, has already been mentioned. In addition, the U.S. Public Health Service, particularly through its Institute of Mental Health, has been active in a number of ways. Besides engaging in direct research on the problems of addiction, this agency has made financial grants in aid of research or studies on alcoholism, and has published and distributed pamphlets and other forms of information.

Cities and Counties.—A few county and large city governments have also set up various types of programs to deal with the problem of alcoholism on the local level. These range from shelters with limited help for homeless men who may be alcoholics, to full treatment and rehabilitation services and educational activities. Local government programs were in operation in the following places in 1954:

California: Alameda County; Los Angeles County; City and County of San Francisco.	New York: New York City.
Massachusetts: Boston.	North Carolina: Rowan County.
Michigan: Detroit.	Ohio: Cincinnati; Toledo.
Minnesota: Minneapolis.	Washington: Seattle.

Prisons.—There is no exact knowledge about the relationship between alcohol and crime, but it is well known that many prison inmates have been excessive drinkers. Officials in many prisons and jails have started programs to prepare these inmates to lead a sober life when released, with better chances of avoiding future trouble. In most cases such programs include Alcoholics Anonymous clubs.

CANADA

IN Canada, as in the United States, a number of the Provinces have set up Boards, Commissions or Foundations with the same purposes as those in the States. Their programs and activities, thus, are likewise similar.

Canadian Provinces which have established agencies engaged in programs on alcoholism include the following:

Alberta
British Columbia
Manitoba

Ontario
Saskatchewan

OTHER COUNTRIES

IN many other countries various types of government programs on alcoholism and other alcohol problems have been started. Some of these are much older than those in the United States and Canada. In Holland, Sweden and Switzerland, for example, systems of public care for alcoholics have existed since early in the century. Active programs exist also in Denmark, Finland, Norway and others.

The World Health Organization, through its Expert Committee on Mental Health, has become active in this field in recent years. It has arranged a series of conferences of specialists from various countries and issued many important documents.

In Sweden, and in Canada in the Province of Ontario, broad research programs have been started with the aid of government funds, and in Finland with funds provided by the government alcohol monopoly.

VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

ASIDE from these government programs, volunteer citizen groups, many affiliated with the National Committee on Alcoholism, some independent, have set up alcoholism clinics or information centers in forty or fifty cities. Most private and volunteer hospitals formerly declined to admit alcoholics because of the old belief that they were simply hopeless drunkards for whom nothing could be done. The same hospitals now accept them as patients in regular or special wards. Alcoholics themselves have helped greatly to bring many of these changes about. This has been done largely through Alcoholics Anonymous, a fellowship of alcoholics whose particular aim is to help each other recover from alcoholism and refrain from drinking.

The National Committee on Alcoholism.—This volunteer organization has the purpose of spreading information about alcoholism as a disease and a public health problem. From its headquarters in New York and also through local affiliated committees in many cities, it works for the opening of clinics or hospital wards for the treatment of alcoholics. It differs from the temperance societies in that it takes no stand for or against drinking by those who are not alcoholics, or on any issues of the control of drinking.

Industry.—Formerly, when excessive drinking was seen to interfere with an employee's job, the policy of management was simply to dismiss him. At most, he might be given a chance to "reform." If he was particularly able on his job, he might be given another chance, and perhaps a "last chance." But if the trouble continued, as it usually did in the case of alcoholics, dismissal was the way out.

A number of leading industrial concerns have recently adopted a new way of dealing with employees found to be problem drinkers: they are encouraged and helped to seek treatment. Some large firms have set up clinics and taken other measures to help their employees who are in danger of going on into severe stages of alcoholism. As a result, many workers have been saved.

Other Organizations.—Among voluntary organizations which have programs or committees, or carry on special activities related to the treatment or prevention of alcoholism, are the following:

The American Medical Association; also, many state and county medical societies.

The American Psychiatric Association.

The Industrial Health Association.

The National States' Conference on Alcoholism. This is an association of the officials of American and Canadian government agencies dealing with alcoholism.

The Yale Center of Alcohol Studies.

A number of religious organizations, too, take part in the movement to help the alcoholic. These include the Salvation Army and the Volunteers of America, both of which have special programs of care for homeless alcoholics. Many of the organized churches have also shown their concern for the alcoholic, as well as renewed interest in other problems connected with alcohol, by appointing special committees or by enlarging the range of their work in this field.

EDUCATION

It is a popular belief and a common saying that the way to solve public problems in a democracy is through education of the people. Teaching about alcohol has been required in the schools of most states in this country for two or three generations. Yet alcohol problems still trouble the land. It seems that classroom education is not enough. But without sound teaching of the facts about alcohol, drinking, and the problems connected with them, citizens would not have a solid basis from which to think and plan their future actions.

Fresh examination of the materials and methods of teaching about alcohol in the past have convinced many educators that there is much room for improvement. As a result, in recent years, teacher groups and many state departments of education have been busy revising textbooks or preparing new manuals and better teaching aids. Teachers have formed a special organization, The Association for the Advancement of Instruction on Alcohol and Narcotics, to help them in this effort. Much research is going on in the field of alcohol education all over the country. The schools are now in a better position than formerly to prepare students to contribute as citizens toward the solution of at least some alcohol problems. In many cases the new state commissions on alcoholism are working together with state and local departments of education in furthering programs of education both in the schools and for the public.

Not all education takes place in the schools, of course. A great deal of teaching about alcohol is carried out by the churches and, especially, by the temperance organizations. Much of this is directed toward persuading young people not to start drinking, and adults to remain or become abstainers, though some churches stress temperance in drinking. All these religious bodies are increasingly making use of knowledge about alcohol derived from studies by scientists.

The home is another and, in fact, the most important source of education about alcohol and drinking. Though this fact is often overlooked, the childhood family is far more influential than school or church in forming the basic ideas, beliefs and attitudes with which men and women later in life will approach drinking or abstaining, alcohol problems and their solution.