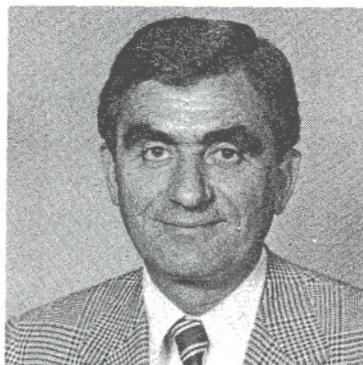


Foreword



Michael C. Geokas, M.D., Ph.D.

It is with some degree of concealed embarrassment that I have edited this Symposium on Ethyl Alcohol and Disease, and the reason for this should be obvious. Ulysses succeeded in escaping from Cyclops' cave by getting him drunk with wine, and Dionysos, the god of wine, was honored by the Greeks with drunken orgies called Dionysia. Social drinking had become an accepted custom in Greece around 400 B.C., and the "Symposia" were drinking parties.

It has been said that ethyl alcohol is perhaps the most versatile and most remarkable of all pharmacological agents. One intriguing theory in anthropology postulates that the neolithic agricultural revolution was probably motivated more by the thirst for beer than by the hunger for bread. Chronic ethanol abuse is associated with a variety of physical illnesses. The purpose of this symposium is to provide an update on the multiple systemic diseases that constitute the result of the direct toxic effect of ethanol on the various organ systems.

I consider this symposium to be extremely timely because of the ever-increasing incidence of alcohol abuse in most societies, with ethyl alcohol being inexpensive and socially acceptable in comparison with other drugs.

This work is especially dedicated to the care of our veteran patients; to the Veterans Administration physicians, nurses, and allied personnel who care for them; to the Clinical and Basic Science Investigators supported by the Veterans Administration Research Service; and to the house staff and medical students who receive part or all of their training at the Veterans Administration Medical Centers.

I hope that physicians will find this issue worthwhile and helpful in dealing with the problems of their patients produced by the abuse of ethyl alcohol, problems that continue to increase in frequency in medical practice.

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Guest Editor

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