

Alcohol, Drugs Dangers Noted

*By this time nearly every citizen of the state is familiar with the problem of drug abuse and the effect that it has on them, their families and associates. However, the Texas Pharmaceutical Association is working on a specialized area of the problem that few people ever thought about or even realized existed. The potentially lethal interaction of alcohol and other drugs is a facet of drug abuse that is widely misunderstood and not generally recognized.

"There are two important considerations to this unique area of the drug abuse problem," says Paul F. Davis, a pharmacist and Director of Public Affairs of the Association, "in that the public as a whole generally does not think of alcohol as being a drug, and that they are lax in their concern for mixing this drug with other drugs."

Thus, the situation is an obvious area that should not exist, but which annually leads to an untold number of deaths and near-fatal reactions that could be avoided.

The interaction of alcohol with sedatives (sleeping pills) is of course fairly well recognized. You frequently hear of suicides and attempted suicides via this route. The question can always be raised though as to how many of these are intentional versus the number of merely accidental overdoses.

The most serious interactions though are the ones that do not necessarily result in death. Those that cause loss of consciousness, decreased coordination and blurred vision may be a significant cause of injury through auto accidents, and accidents in the home or while at work.

To understand the problem we need to realize that the consumption of alcoholic beverages is far more prevalent than most people realize. To place this problem in a better perspective it is worthwhile to make note of the extent of alcoholic consumption in the United States today. Seventy-one percent of the age group between 21 and 29 drink; of the age group

between 30 and 49, 76 percent drink; and of the persons aged 50 and over, 61 percent drink. By economic distribution, 86 percent of the affluent drink, 66 percent of the average income group drink, while only 54 percent of the lower income group drink.

The amount of alcohol consumed by the American public is even more alarming. Per capita consumption for each individual over the age of 15 is currently at the amazing annual rate of 2.4 gallons of pure (100%) alcohol.

To add weight to the problem, in an analysis of the National Prescription Audit for 1971 prepared by the R. A. Gosselin Company, one would find that approximately 25% of all prescriptions contained substances which can and do interact when combined with alcohol. Additionally, of the top 100 most commonly prescribed drugs in 1971, over 50% contained at least one ingredient that has been documented to interact with alcohol. To further complicate the problem many of the relatively "safe" over-the-counter drugs (those available without a prescription) have ingredients which can interact with alcohol.

So, what is there to do? First, in cooperation with the Texas Commission on Alcoholism, the Texas Pharmaceutical Association has developed brochures, posters and public service announcements to call the public's attention to this most important area.

Secondly, the Association says everyone should follow some general "common sense" rules:

—If possible, always avoid taking any kind of medication or drug before, after or while drinking an alcoholic beverage.

—If you must take medications, always check with your pharmacist or physician before drinking. Many drugs do not interact with alcohol and you can feel perfectly safe in combining the two.

—Never underestimate the potency of non-prescription medications. Never combine them

with alcohol or exceed the recommended dosage without consent of your doctor.

—Never take sleeping pills while intoxicated. (This is reported to have been the cause of several untimely deaths. While intoxicated, individuals occasionally forget if they have taken sleeping medication and can easily repeat the dosage ultimately resulting in death or severe coma.)

As part of the grant, the Association has developed a slide-tape presentation which is avail-

able through the local pharmaceutical association. Persons desiring additional information should contact their pharmacist or the Texas Pharmaceutical Association (Post Office Box 4487, Austin, Texas 78765).

*Statistics and data provided by the Texas Commission on Alcoholism, 809 Sam Houston State Office Building, Austin, Texas 78701; and Dr. Victor A. Yanchick, Associate Professor of Pharmacy, College of Pharmacy, The University of Texas at Austin.

Food Situation In Uncertain State

"The overall food situation is currently in a state of uncertainty," Mrs. Gwendolyn Clyatt said this week.

"Under Phase IV controls, a more normal marketing pattern of fresh fruits and vegetables is expected," according to the consumer marketing information specialist, A&M's Texas Agricultural Extension Service.

"However, demand exceeds supply" is showing up on many commodity market reports. This will undoubtedly result in continued higher prices.

"It's most difficult to forecast fruit and vegetable supply-price situations at this time, but consumers still can buy wisely if they watch for locally grown and nearby produce, make their own selections and take the best possible care of the items when they get home with them," she said. Seasonal items include cantaloupes, peaches, nectarines, seedless white grapes, cherries, plums and pineapples.

Also cucumbers, corn-on-the-cob, blackeye and purple hull

Insurance Rate Increase Seen

An increase in some workmen's compensation insurance rates is due under a new law increasing benefits for those injured or killed in job accidents.

An average 19.5 per cent hike in the rates employers must pay for the coverage is anticipated under a State Insurance Board staff proposal, which would become effective if approved between September 1 and September 15.

Rates would have gone up 22.8 per cent in the absence of the federal anti-inflation program, a Board actuary indicated.

Under new law effective September, an injured worker can get up to a maximum of \$63 a week in benefits, an increase from the present \$49 top.

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