

The Origins of Modern Research and Responses Relevant to Problems of Alcohol

A Brief History of the First Center of Alcohol Studies

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Because alcohol had sometimes been used as an anesthetic, it came to be studied in the Laboratory of Applied Physiology at Yale University by the great physiologist Yandell Henderson and his associate Howard W. Haggard as one of the drugs of interest for the alleviation of pain.

1. THE 1930s

Beginning in the early 1930s, researchers in this laboratory published a series of important papers on the effects of alcohol. After the law in the United States that had prohibited commerce in alcoholic beverages was rescinded in 1933, a widespread renewed public concern about alcohol developed, especially over its effects on drinkers. The Laboratory at Yale then began to receive many requests for “scientific” knowledge about alcohol. Haggard, who had succeeded Henderson as Professor of Physiology and Director of the Laboratory, realized that he and the other physiologists and biochemists on his staff did not have the knowledge to answer many of the inquiries, which involved social, psychological, and even economic and political issues. Alcohol in drink was not just a physicochemical substance.

Although Haggard had graduated from the Yale Medical School with the M.D. degree, he had not chosen to practice as a physician. His interests were in research and education. Thus, he broadcast the first unsponsored public radio program on health and authored the popular *Devils, Drugs and Doctors*. When, in 1937, the Research Council on Problems of Alcohol was formed, he was invited to serve on its Scientific Advisory Committee. He supported the Council in obtaining a grant, from the Carnegie Corpora-

tion, for a review of the biological literature on effects of alcohol. The grant was then assigned to the New York University College of Medicine, where the staff of Norman Jolliffe had already begun some preliminary documentation in the desired direction. Jolliffe was therefore named Medical Director of the review project.

Jolliffe's first step was destined to have enormous influence on everything connected with alcohol and alcoholism—in research and education, public attitudes, and treatment—that would happen in the next 50 years or more: He drove from New York City to Worcester, Massachusetts, and there persuaded E. M. Jellinek to become the executive director of the projected review.

With the documentalist from Jolliffe's staff at his right hand, and a newly hired staff of multilingual abstractors—mostly physicians and psychologists—and with the resources especially of the library of the New York Academy of Medicine, Jellinek completed the essential review task in some 16 months (September 1939–December 1940). A vast volume of facts had been abstracted and systematically entered in a newly designed, subject-indexed, mechanically retrievable archive. But the grant fund was exhausted, and many months of work remained to be done in writing and editing the review.

2. THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF STUDIES ON ALCOHOL

It was Howard W. Haggard who demonstrated the foresight and capacity to solve this problem. While the project was hardly midway, in early 1940, he founded, at Yale in the Laboratory of Applied Physiology, the *Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol*. The *Journal* would provide, among other contents, a medium for publication of the emerging reports from the review then in progress (Jellinek and Jolliffe, 1940; Jellinek and McFarland, 1940). Now he invited Jellinek to come to Yale, with his staff, there to complete the review. Haggard, perhaps the most popular professor at Yale,* was able to raise the financial support for this costly undertaking among alumni families. He had in mind, however, that members of the review staff would participate in other work at the Laboratory.†

Work in formulating reviews, especially of the medical aspects of the effects of alcohol, progressed steadily. They were published in the first two volumes of the *Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol* (1940–1942) and assembled in a volume published by Yale University Press (Jellinek, 1942a).

While the grand literature review and some research on drugs other than alcohol absorbed Jellinek at first, he did not neglect the wider interest in alcohol of Haggard, his boss, and of the Research Council, where he was now vice-chairman of the Scientific

*His course in physiology was known among the collegians as Sex I and Sex II.

†Indeed, Jellinek there designed an ingenious study of the effects of various drugs, used in combination in commercial "pain killers" (other than alcohol), which proved of great value to pharmaceutical manufacturers as well as to the Laboratory. Historically, it is possible that this was the first "double blind" experiment (Jellinek, 1946). In addition, both Martin Gross and Giorgio Lolli of the review staff became regular participants in the physiological researches at the Laboratory. Other staff who followed Jellinek to Yale and participated in the alcohol-related developments were Gertrude Gross, a psychiatrist, Anne Roe, a psychologist, and Vera Efron and Mark Keller, documentalists.