

BOOK REVIEW

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A Review of Alcohol, Drugs, and Traffic Safety

REFERENCE: Israelstam, S. and Lambert, S., *Alcohol, Drugs, and Traffic Safety*, Addiction Research Foundation of Ontario, Toronto, Ontario M5S 2S1 Canada, 1975, 939 pages, \$30.00.

The proceedings of the 6th International Conference on Alcohol, Drugs, and Traffic Safety are conveniently divided into five sections: (1) the epidemiology of alcohol and drug-related traffic accidents; (2) pharmacological, physiological, and psychological aspects relevant to driving impairment; (3) analytical aspects; (4) control and prevention; and (5) public education and information.

To adequately review this volume consisting of 91 papers, it would be necessary to comment on each paper individually. Since that is not possible, it will perhaps suffice to cite the major topics and offer general comments.

The first section, consisting of 21 papers, deals with the epidemiology of alcohol and drug-related accidents. It is apparent from these papers that procedural errors and careless research have contributed to misunderstandings in past studies. Authors suggest research topics and means of dealing with drinking-driving problems of the future.

The second section consists of 22 papers on the pharmacological, physiological, and psychological aspects relevant to driving impairment. The effects of low and high concentrations of ethanol on driving performance are considered along with the effects of various other widely used drugs such as tranquilizers, sedative-hypnotics, and "street drugs," in both the non-drinking and drinking driver. The relationship between drug aftereffects and traffic safety is briefly discussed and hopefully this neglected area of research will be reported on at future meetings.

Nineteen papers are presented on the analytical analysis of ethanol and other drugs in the intoxicated driver. Only one paper is devoted to the automation of alcohol analysis, but many other methods are evaluated or criticized. The newer methods presented for drug detection and identification include mass spectrometry and immunoassays which are often capable of detecting far less than therapeutic blood concentrations of many common drugs. An important aspect which is all too briefly touched upon is the reliability of alcohol and other drug determinations. Also, quality assurance is limited to several papers.

Sixteen papers on control and prevention evaluate some of our established methods and question their effectiveness, as well as broadly cover other aspects. The final section of the proceedings presents some provocative papers on various programs involving public education and information.

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In general, the papers in this volume are written by specialists from more than 30 countries representing such varied fields as social and physical research, counseling, education, medicine, technology, and the law. History, problems, and criticisms of past work are covered in these proceedings, as is current research. The volume as it stands is of considerable value to all interested in drugs and driving.

On the negative side, the long delay between the conference and the availability of the proceedings is disturbing. The quality of the papers varies greatly, although many are excellent. I would hope that future editors would eliminate those of no special importance. Those pages could better be used for a comprehensive index which is sadly missed in this volume.