

# Despite outpatient data on patterns of drinking alcohol, budd's 1855 monograph on the stomach failed to recognize the potentiality of prevention

## Abstract

Cancer history literature revealed striking statements on alcohol drinking. Surprisingly, the references dated up to 1855 when Budd's monograph on the stomach still wondered about the role of alcoholism in stomach cancer causation. Therefore, this article presents several examples that should have hastened the appreciation of its prevention. This raises the need for further research.

**Keywords:** stomach, cancer, causation, alcoholism, history, prevention

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## Introduction

Personal interest in the history of cancer dated back to 1958.<sup>1,2</sup> Nowadays, some preventive studies have been published personally in this Journal.<sup>3-6</sup> Here, the slant is on preventing stomach cancer from the historical angle of alcoholism.

## Historical texts

Perhaps, the simplest historical reference to not drinking alcohol was to the patient being "a man of temperate and steady habits."<sup>7</sup> This is a word defined in Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary as "sober."<sup>8</sup>

Sober habits were described mildly in terms of the patient being "temperate" by Paget<sup>9</sup> himself. While Seymour<sup>10</sup> qualified a man as being "remarkably temperate in his habits," Cooper<sup>11</sup> promoted a woman who was "temperate in her habits." Another rendition was "perfectly temperate."<sup>12</sup>

Temperate people were naturally contrasted with the intemperate. Thus, there was "intemperance as to strong liquours"<sup>13</sup> as well as "given to the intemperate use of malt and spirituous liquours."<sup>14</sup> There was also the generalized description concerning "an intemperate man."<sup>15</sup> Intemperance was described in a woman who "had been for many years a notorious dram-drinker."<sup>16</sup> Scarpa<sup>17</sup> noted two patients; one of them was "addicted to intemperance" and the other "addicted to fermented liquours." Bell's case was of a sailor "addicted to drinking."<sup>18</sup>

## Literature citations

Drinking, as regards etiology, was contemplated by Walshe,<sup>19</sup> who in 1846 cited the literature on the role of alcohol in some cases but with an element of doubt as follows: "I see nothing impossible in the sequences; but they are certainly rare: and their apparent occurrence may in reality depend, sometimes at least, upon the excessive difficulty of distinguishing the symptoms of cancer at the very outset from those produced by the other two kinds of gastric affection.

Affection due to alcoholism was considered by Forbes et al.,<sup>20</sup> who were equally guarded in their earlier 1835 contribution to a cyclopaedia, wherein they maintained that, in addition to heredity,

"Other causes are to be enumerated of a more definite and local character; amongst which is to be first mentioned the long-continued use of ardent spirits."

## Monograph on the stomach

So far, we have ranged from cases of temperate drinking of alcohol to grades of intemperance. Moreover, we have just noted the existence of some revealing literature cases. Accordingly, let us consider a monograph. By 1855, Budd<sup>21</sup> published it as regards the stomach. Set against the aforesaid important backgrounds, what was his conclusion? It ran thus in terms of gastric cancer.

The disease occurs in all classes of society, from the emperor to the beggar; in the sober as well as in the dissipated; in people who live in the country, as well as in those who live in towns. Indeed, no habits or conditions of life have as yet been shown to have any powerful influence in bringing it on.

## Conclusion

On weighing the historical evidences, it is apparent that, during the first half of the 19th Century, the hunt was hot for the role of alcohol in its causation. Clearly, doubts prevailed even by 1855, when a monograph on the stomach was published authoritatively. Hence, I am persuaded that the historical panorama was wide enough to blame alcoholism and to propose prevention. Why this failed during that prime period requires further research.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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