

Naturalistic Follow-Up of Drinking Behavior Following Participation in an Alcohol Administration Study

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Abstract

Administration of alcohol to alcohol-dependent individuals for research purposes, while contributing significantly to the fund of knowledge on etiology and treatment of alcohol dependence, has often raised clinical and ethical concerns that such exposure may adversely affect the individual's motivation to reduce drinking or abstain from drinking. In an attempt to evaluate these concerns, we conducted a naturalistic follow-up of subsequent drinking among individuals who participated in an alcohol self-administration study and also received a brief motivational intervention. Twenty-one non-treatment-seeking alcoholics participated in a study examining the effects of naltrexone on alcohol self-administration. Assessment of drinking during the 3 months following the laboratory study indicated that participants had significantly reduced the total number of drinking days and the number of drinks consumed per occasion, as compared to baseline levels. The findings suggest that participation in alcohol administration research does not adversely influence the subsequent drinking of alcohol-dependent individuals. Further, when the alcohol administration research is conducted carefully, with specific attention to the clinical needs of the participants, the risks of adverse effects on participants' drinking behavior is minimal, and, in fact, there is scientific benefit to society and clinical benefit to the participants with regard to their alcoholism.

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