

Discussion (II)

Can we solve the alcoholic problems before they come?

E. Bernspång

In this brief talk I will not in any way discourage the work that is done in way of research and care in order to help those who are already alcoholics. But we know through bitter experience that in most cases the help comes too late, if it does not come before the person is addicted to alcohol.

My burden is therefore to raise the question whether we in the International Association for Suicide Prevention or in this congress could do something that would prevent people from becoming alcoholics.

Recently scientists gave an alarming report concerning the dangers of tobacco. The immediate result was that thousands of people gave up smoking and manufacturers put in a lot of research in order to make the cigarettes less dangerous.

We have seen the suffering due to alcohol. We know the national financial losses, crimes, imprisonments, mental disturbances, heartbreaking divorces and indescribable agony because of alcohol. We have seen mothers' agony because their sons were alcoholics. And we know of these thousands of children who will never be privileged to meet life with mental health and happiness because their homes were ruined by alcohol. We have seen how alcoholism leads to suicide.

I know that a hundred years ago the alcoholic situation was terrible in northern Europe. That time a religious awakening gave the solution and I am not sure that anything less radical will help us today.

But efforts inspired by love to mankind have never been fruitless. Therefore I believe that something can be done.

May I suggest that we work out a report or start a more continuous propaganda, possibly in co-operation with WHO. What we write let it be scientifically sound and true, and yet let us write in a clear and popular language so that we reach the man in the street and our boys and girls in school. Let us appeal not only to the intellect of people but also to will and emotion.

And I believe it would be profitable if our reactions are in a healthy way alarming. For we know that the alcoholic situation is alarming.

Address of the author: *Erik Bernspång*, Pastor, Starrvägen 13, Tumba, Sweden.

The Evaluation of suicidal potential

E. Cohen

Our clinical and research instrument for the evaluation of suicidal potential is composed of 22 questions worded so that if the answer is «Yes», it falls into a high risk category; if «No», a low risk category. A coded score for each high risk factor gives an indication