Antabuse Encyclopedia Article

Antabuse

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.

Contents

Antabuse Encyclopedia Article.....1

Contents.....2

Antabuse.....3

Antabuse

Antabuse, also known by its scientific name disulfiram, is a medication that was approved in 1951 by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (USDA) for the treatment of alcoholism. It deters the drinker's desire for alcohol by causing extremely unpleasant symptoms upon alcohol consumption.

Danish researchers Eric Jacobsen (1903-) and Jens Hald discovered antabuse by accident in 1947. At the Royal Danish School of Pharmacy in Copenhagen, Jacobsen and Hald were studying compounds for possible use in treating parasitic stomach infections. One of the compounds was disulfiram. As was common among researchers of the day, both men took a small dose of disulfiram to check for possible side effects. At a cocktail party several days later, both men became very ill after having a drink. Because each experienced the same symptoms at the same time, they concluded that the disulfiram, triggered by the alcohol, was responsible for the illness. They quickly conducted a study to confirm their findings, publishing it the same year.

Antabuse disrupts the body's metabolism of alcohol in the liver. Normally, certain enzymes break down alcohol into acetaldehyde, and other enzymes break this product down into acetate. Disulfiram blocks the breakdown of acetaldehyde, resulting in a rapid rise of acetaldehyde in the blood. When this happens, a person has a disulfiram-ethanol reaction., which leads to severe headache, difficulty in breathing, chest pains, vomiting, and drop in blood pressure. Very rarely, it can result in death.

The first American to use antabuse for the treatment of alcoholism was New York City psychoanalyst Ruth Fox (1918-), who began treating 50 patients with the drug in 1949. After her patients reported serious side effects under the recommended dosage, Fox cut the dosage and counseled patients on the severe reactions that could result from drinking alcohol. She found that antabuse was effective in deterring drinking among alcoholics and went on to treat about 2,500 patients with it.

Approximately 200,000 people take antabuse daily in the United States. The longer a patient remains on antabuse, the more sensitive he or she becomes to alcohol. However, antabuse is not a cure for alcoholism, and chronic alcoholics taking the drug have a high relapse rate. In addition, a 1980 study reported that alcoholics taking antabuse could get a euphoric reaction if they consumed small amounts of alcohol, thereby conditioning them to continue their addictive behavior. Antabuse work best in patients committed to change.