

British neuroscientist proposes drug alternatives to alcohol for drinkers

November 12 2013, by Bob Yirka



(Medical Xpress)—Former chair of Britain's Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, David Nutt is on a mission. He and his team at Imperial College in London are convinced that developing drugs that simulate the sensations that arise in people when drinking alcoholic beverages is an idea whose time has come. Nutt has been espousing his ideas to the British press (including the BBC) and to online magazines.

Drinking alcohol is a dangerous business, there's no arguing that. Not only does it cause people to crash when driving, it lowers inhibitions causing people to engage in risky behavior. As if all that weren't enough, more than casual use can lead to liver and/or brain damage. Nutt notes

that if alcohol were invented today, every nation would outlaw its production and use. But since that's not going to happen, he's advocating it be replaced by other, safer types of drugs.

More specifically, he's suggesting the development of drugs that specifically target subsystems of the neurotransmitter system—the one that's involved in producing the warm relaxed buzz when exposed to alcohol. Such drugs are of the class known as benzodiazepines—others include Xanax and Valium. Nutt says such drugs could be developed that have all the advantages of alcohol, without the negatives. People could get "drunk" without a follow-up hangover. They could also do so as often as they want without getting addicted or hurting their bodies in other ways. Better yet, because such drugs would target the brain directly, antidotes for them could be made as well. That would mean taking a pill before getting in the car to kill the buzz and allow for immediate safe driving.

Unfortunately, as Nutt has found, there are few in the spirits business willing to sponsor his research—there's a lot of money being made selling [alcoholic beverages](#) after all. Undaunted, Nutt has noted that there is a precedent—not too long ago cigarette companies refused to even think about getting in the e-cigarette business, now most of them are the very companies making and selling them.

Nutt has said that he's narrowed down five components that could be used to make the faux alcohol and has even tested them on himself. The only thing stopping him, he claims, is lack of capital for research. It's not entirely clear if Nutt's media marketing campaign will work (or if he's considered setting up a crowd-sourcing project) but if it does, he at least seems convinced that it would mean the end of many of the problems associated with [alcohol](#) use and abuse.

More information: via [The Guardian](#)

© 2013 Medical Xpress

Citation: British neuroscientist proposes drug alternatives to alcohol for drinkers (2013, November 12) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-11-british-neuroscientist-drug-alternatives-alcohol.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.