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“Application A576 – Labelling of Alcoholic Beverages with a Pregnancy Health Advisory Label”

Kia ora,

My friends with the resounding voice for Indigenous people across the Pacific, can you please ensure this submission is included in support of the ALAC submission to place warning labels regarding the dangers of drinking when pregnant on alcohol containers. I support alcohol labelling on ethical, moral, and fiduciary grounds. Since the time of colonisation of Australia, Aboriginal people have had no resistance or metabolic tolerance to alcohol brought to Australia by the Crown with their shiploads and shiploads of Rum and now we have Aboriginal people born with FAS giving birth to babies with FAS because they have no genetic DNA material for metabolising spirits brewed from European grains, from which most Western alcohol derives.

Aboriginal people, to this day have one third less nephrons in their kidneys because their diet was not ready for the imposition of a Western diet of processed foods. Unfortunately, the lower number of nephrons reduced Aboriginal people's life expectancy and hopes of surviving colonisation have been cut severely short. The subject has been an important area of investigation for John Bertrum, Andreas, and scientists in the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism over the past years.

There are articles that indicate, variants of Class I alcohol dehydrogenase, specifically ADH 2*2 (or under the new nomenclature ADH1B*2) has been shown to be associated with a decreased risk for alcoholism in both the Asian population and American and Jewish populations among whom the variant is found with significant gene frequency. Another variant of ADH, the ADH2*3 (or ADH1B*3), may be associated with a decreased risk for alcoholism among African American individuals. As I indicated these genes are associated with a decreased risk but not total protection from the development of alcoholism. They also have been shown to be associated with a decreased risk for fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) and other neurobehavioral outcomes associated with the broader category of fetal alcohol spectrum disorders(FASD).

One such article reads

New York researchers confirm that a high percentage of Jews carry a gene that seems to prevent alcoholism. About 44 percent of the 68 Jewish participants the scientists tested were found to carry a variant of a gene that produces a more active form of alcohol dehydrogenase, the enzyme that catalyzes the first step in the metabolism of alcohol. Previous research has shown this gene exists among both Asian and Jewish populations, although it is relatively uncommon among Caucasians; estimates are that only 2 percent to 5 percent of Caucasians carry it.

The ADH2*2 variant of the gene ADH2 has been shown to prevent heavy drinking, but this is the first study to show it also exerts an effect on alcohol dependence in Jewish groups, according to Deborah Hasin, Professor of Clinical Public Health at Columbia University. Results suggest the protective effect is stronger among the two more established groups of Israeli Jews, the Ashkenazis (those of European descent and Russian background who arrived before 1989) and Sephardics (those of Middle Eastern and North African backgrounds). Less protected were recent immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

Another protective variant of an alcohol associated metabolic enzyme is the mitochondrial aldehyde

dehydrogenase (ALDH) variant ALDH2*2. This variant has greatly reduced capacity to metabolize the first metabolic product of alcohol, acetaldehyde, to acetate, resulting in elevated levels of the noxious intermediate acetaldehyde following alcohol ingestion. This enzyme variant is found in about 50 percent of Asian populations. Its association with FAS protection has not been reported, likely related to the absence of FAS studies in Asian populations.

Similar to most Western European populations, these enzyme variants are rare among American Indian and Canadian First Nation populations. You can draw your own conclusions as to why to this day no one has studied whether the ADH and ALDH gene profile has yet to be studied among the Aboriginal populations of Australia or of New Zealand. My own belief is that a fiduciary duty was breached when Aboriginal peoples wages were paid in alcohol, and compensation for creating generations of alcoholics is not something the Australian Government would like to be responsible for but as you can see they are aware of their duty of care and that is why they have introduced alcohol management plans and banned alcohol in Territories as well as discreet communities. You didn't really think it was because they wanted Aboriginal people to survive did you? I digress to the media announcement this week showing that Australians are the greediest property manipulators in the world, that's an Aboriginal translation for 'Australia has the least affordable housing in the world', you'd have to ask 'why, when they got the land for nothing less than 5 generations ago.

Research is ongoing to identify other genetic risk and protective factors for alcoholism. One of the articles describes a variant of the neurotransmitter receptor for acetylcholine that has been associated with an increased risk of alcoholism and depression. Other genes likely contributing to risk include variants related to receptors for the neurotransmitter gamma-amino-butyric (abbreviated GABA) acid a neuropeptide called Neuropeptide Y. Through the identification of both genetic and behavioural treatments, it is hoped that scientists will be able to develop medications targeted to specific sites active in alcoholism for the treatment and/or prevention of this disease. There is a potential for gene therapy but it is far removed from the current imperative to keep these disorders expanding among Aboriginal people and there are underlying genetic risk factors in every disease because they all stem from a genetic predisposition that gets triggered by environmental, diet and lifestyle factors. Nature does not verse Nurture they are one and the same.

Best Regards

Robyn Lucienne

AssDipArt, BhSc, LLb, Sol

 **please protect the environment, if printing choose double sided and recycle paper.**

These are not the views of the Queensland Government and are not to be construed as anything but my own opinions in support of my Aboriginal brothers and sisters right across Australia.

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