include court ordered disulfiram (antabuse). Disulfiram reacts with alcohol resulting in an immediate physical aversive reaction that is meant to serve as a deterrent. When compliance is assured, disulfiram usually leads to abstinence from alcohol.4 There are exceptions and disulfiram would be contraindicated in the medically unstable. This approach is also not suited to individuals who are so weakened or cognitively impaired that they are unable to enter into meaningful treatment contracting. Disulfiram, when it is used in a coercive manner does in fact call into question the balance between individual and society rights.

There is clearly no single approach to addressing alcoholism. Treatment needs to be targeted to the specials needs of the individual, taking into account special population needs and many other variables. What is clear is that the costs of alcoholism and other substance abuse to society are prohibitive. It remains extremely important that professional and public interest organizations strive to work together and seek consensus, in a way that will facilitate the implementation of a national alcohol strategy.

Alan Gordon
Associate Medical Director, Chief of Clinical Addiction Services, Butler Hospital
Clinical Assistant Professor, Brown University
Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior, Providence, RI, USA
email: agordon@butler.org

References

Letter from the editor

Greetings to all our readers, we wish you a most informative 2005! This edition offers an opportunity to thank those who contributed articles during 2004, and those who reviewed them: Dana Niehaus, Cliff Allwood, Lennart Eriksson, Andy Schenk, ALlan Schore, Shira Moch, Michael Berk, Gabor Keitner, Roland Eastman, Tuviah Zabow, Mike Ewart Smith and Myles Connor. The year ahead sees the launch of an educational grant for the best article/s of the year. A special thank you to the sponsors. We hope this initiative will add impetus to the Journal’s efforts to galvanise South African psychiatry in terms of published output. The grant of R50 000 per year will run for 5 years. So, a wonderful opportunity for funding. This aside from the subsidy for publishing in a DE accredited journal. Finally, to industry, thank you for your support with no strings attached and absolute respect for editorial discretion. We look forward to an ongoing relationship that can only make South African psychiatry stronger.

Christopher P. Szabo
Editor-in-Chief