

# Review of: "[Commentary] Balancing the bio in a biopsychosocial model of hazardous drinking and alcohol use disorders"

Vincent Wagner<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Université de Sherbrooke

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

With this comment, the authors (Morris et al.) wish to criticize the very biologically and genetically focused posture taken by the authors of the article *Hazardous Drinking and Alcohol Use Disorders* (MacKillop et al., 2022) in their discussion of the etiology and treatment of problematic alcohol use and alcohol use disorders.

The authors point out that MacKillop et al. place an excessive emphasis, with often little evidence support, on the genetic determinants of these behaviors, while more than justifiably ignoring the weight of environmental factors. If the commented article has a very individual focus, the commentary wishes to widen the perspectives by reintroducing the role of population-level factors, both in the understanding of problematic alcohol use behaviors and associated disorders, and in their treatment. Morris et al. offer arguments as to how a population-based approach would be more effective, pragmatic, and equitable than a purely individual approach as derived from an exclusive consideration of the weight of biogenetic factors. The authors also point out how an overemphasis on the individual, and implying for instance that only a minority are inherently "destined" to develop issues related to their alcohol use, can be problematic, and that this is a position that is often held by the alcohol industry and has the potential to influence policy decisions, with implications for the availability of services for those who may need them.

Throughout the text, the authors highlight the importance of thinking carefully about the modeling adopted to reflect these phenomena, as this can lead directly and indirectly to creating and sustaining other issues, such as stigmatization and inability to provide tailored services for the needs of people who present a hazardous alcohol use or an AUD. In the best of all possible worlds, one should probably be able to consider both biomedical and psychosocial sets of factors, which may contribute together to these phenomena, at different levels, moments, effects, etc. This balanced model (i.e., closer to a true biopsychosocial model) is not that developed in the commentary, but I do understand the authors' perspective in favor of psychosocial factors, considering the traditional weight of biogenetic factors in the scientific literature, and our societies. Perhaps this would be a point to develop further?

Finally, while this article focuses heavily on the issue of alcohol use and AUD, I think that these questions could be extended to all psychoactive substances, including illegal/illicit ones, where the weight of psychosocial factors is probably even more significant. The perspectives of the authors of this commentary are interesting, and probably should go beyond critiquing MacKillop et al. article.

