

Addiction research and policy in the face of diminishing support

Editorial

“It is heartbreaking seeing all the researchers, especially early career researchers, losing grants and losing momentum. It’s hard to think about writing new grants or coming up with new research ideas with so much unknown.”

“In some states, all grants must go through legal before being submitted to make sure they don’t have any “banned” (e.g. DEI) topics in them.”

Despite continuing growth in publishing, there are setbacks across the world, with vision and support for research and its dissemination lagging, while scientific independence is threatened. As editors at IJADR, we are deeply concerned about the actions of the current US Administration that interfere with the undertaking and dissemination of scientific research in the addiction field. The actions of this administration have implications that extend beyond its US borders, and which continue to evolve on a daily basis. In the article authored by Babor and 28 other current and former journal editors (Babor, et al., 2025), we call out the censorship of scientific discourse by the US Administration, which has mandated that all scientific manuscripts authored by Centre for Disease Control personnel in the US be withdrawn so that “forbidden terms” related to gender can be removed. Public access to some health-related databases has been removed, and funding has been arbitrarily reduced without justification. Research grants and training programs have been terminated; and there have been mass firings of people in critical health areas. Government databases have been used to identify people who have included diversity as a focus of their research. At the time of the article, USAID was threatened with elimination and clinical trials investigating HIV treatments have been paused. Finally, consideration is being given to reducing National Institutes of Health (NIH) support for addiction research. As editors of IJADR, and as members of the International Society for Addiction Journal Editors (ISAJE), we call for reason, and for recognition and support for research undertaken by our colleagues in the US and across the globe. The article, *A clarion call to the addiction science community: It’s time to resist the anti-scientific policies of the US Trump administration*, is available via this [link](#). It describes how we can take action as journal editors, addiction society members, and as individual scientists to protect the scientific infrastructure that we have developed over the past 50 years.

While many of us now must work and write in situations that are less certain and supported, at IJADR we are privileged to be able to publish in this issue articles from international

projects based in Africa (South Africa, Uganda), Europe (Sweden), and North America (Canada). These papers include epidemiological studies (Raninen et al., 2025), policy studies related to alcohol and cannabis (Parry, 2025; Purves et al., 2025; Sornpaisarn et al., 2025), and a qualitative paper on the important topic of alcohol’s role in severe intimate partner violence (Ramsoomar et al., 2025).

Ramsoomar and colleagues’ paper explores the role of male partner alcohol use in severe intimate partner violence, reporting on the lived experience of 62 adult women from three provinces in South Africa. Some readers may find the qualitative accounts of severe intimate partner violence contained within this paper distressing. The authors sensitively report on three overarching themes arising from the data: (a) the different forms of alcohol-related severe intimate partner violence that participants experienced, (b) the frequency, contexts, and patterns of alcohol consumption, and (c) how participants understood the role of alcohol in their experiences of severe intimate partner violence. Findings highlight how women perceive their partner’s alcohol use creates a risk for intimate partner violence, supporting previous research which shows that alcohol use increases both the frequency and severity of intimate partner violence. Ramsoomar and colleagues call for increased research and interventions to explore alcohol’s role in the risk of femicide in South Africa. They also call for future public health policy initiatives to address gender-based violence and alcohol in a complementary manner, rather than as two separate issues.

Noting that policy shifts and responses to global events (i.e., COVID-19) can greatly re-shape alcohol sales and consumption patterns, Parry (2025) explores the utility of using South African industry sales data to detect population level trends in consumption overtime and beverage-specific changes. Industry sales data shows a stable trend in per capita consumption in overall volume over time between 2000 and 2022, however beverage-specific trends show a substantial increase in Ready-To-Drink (RTD) consumption, and a decrease in wine consumption (trends not captured in current survey data). Short-term COVID-related declines were found, although consumption levels returned to pre-COVID levels in 2022, and industry data on packaging for wine was able to show the immediate and longer-term impact of the 2007 ban on wine sold in foil bags. This exploration shows the value of sales data for understanding population level changes, especially given the frequency of data collection and more recent estimates

compared to national surveys. However, Parry expertly discusses several challenges associated with industry data, including the lack of information on sub-populations of interest and demographic characteristics, and describes several next steps for obtaining better sales data to support research moving forward.

Adolescent alcohol consumption has substantially declined across many high-income countries (Vashishtha et al., 2021), including Sweden. The cause for this decline is unknown, however it has been linked to parenting factors in some studies (Ramstedt et al., 2022). Raninen and colleagues identify two parenting factors that affect adolescent alcohol use, which may potentially influence drinking trends. Both parental support and parental monitoring, which includes any behavior a parent undertakes to stay informed about their children's activities, have been associated with reduced alcohol consumption among adolescents (Yap et al., 2017). Raninen and colleagues use data from two waves of a nationwide Swedish questionnaire to examine the cross-sectional and longitudinal relationships between parenting practices and adolescent alcohol consumption. Overall results suggest that both parental support and parental monitoring were associated with lower alcohol consumption, however parental monitoring was the more important factor. However, parental monitoring alone was ineffective at reducing alcohol consumption when parental support was too low. While it is unclear whether these factors have contributed directly to the decline in alcohol consumption among adolescents, the findings could inform policies which aim to further reduce adolescent alcohol consumption, by supporting parents' ability to monitor their children.

Sornpaisarn and colleagues (2025) conducted an analysis of cannabis price and tax structures in Ontario, Canada to evaluate how taxation could be better aligned with public health objectives. By comparing two excise tax approaches—one based on a flat rate per gram of flower and the other on a per-milligram of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC)—they found that taxing cannabis by THC content could lead to more favorable public health outcomes. The findings showed that the weight-based tax results in lower effective taxes on high-THC products, which are preferred by consumers, potentially encouraging their use despite associated health risks. High-THC cannabis products are effectively taxed less per milligram of THC under the current weight-based system, unintentionally promoting their use. Shifting to a THC-based tax would correct this incentive and encourage consumption of lower-potency products, supporting public health goals. The authors conclude that implementing THC-based taxation is both feasible and advisable, supported by regulatory requirements already in place in Canada and by models from U.S. states. They recommend adjusting the cannabis tax system in Ontario to tax all products based on their THC content and indexing the rate to inflation, in order to discourage high-potency consumption and enhance long-term policy sustainability.

Uganda has the highest per capita consumption of alcohol in the African region (WHO, 2024). Like other parts of Africa, where there is limited regulation of alcohol marketing

(Morojele et al., 2021), Uganda is a strategic focus of the alcohol industry (Babor et al., 2015). Purves and colleagues (2025), using community case studies, explore the nature and extent of the activities involved in alcohol sports sponsorship in Uganda. Undertaking desk-based reviews of news outlets and social media pages, and site visits to sporting venues, they reported on multiple sponsorships by alcohol companies of professional sport, including football, basketball, and golf. As part of these sponsorship arrangements, examples were provided of how company activities explicitly promoted alcohol products or subtly blended their branding into sport-related content. Alcohol company- and sport-related content was distributed via social media channels, limited edition products, brand logos on match strips, and as advertising and promotion inside and outside sporting venues. Alcohol industry representatives also featured in sport news reports. The types of sponsorship evident in Uganda mirror activities used around the world by transnational companies. These companies position themselves as central to the sustainability of sports, the Ugandan economy, and culture in Uganda. Purves and colleagues, underline how sports sponsorship is used to promote alcohol brands and argue that their findings should inform future policy decisions regarding alcohol marketing in Uganda and more widely across Africa and the Global South. *Editor-in-Chief: Anne-Marie Laslett*

As guest editors, we are proud to publish the first set of papers from KBS 2024 in this issue, and we are planning to publish a further issue. We very much look forward to seeing you in Glasgow for the [KBS 50th Anniversary Conference](#), and encourage you to submit your papers to IJADR for our KBS 2025 issue.

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