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Letter to the Editor of JSAD Regarding the INEBRIA Position Statement

Dear Editor,

I appreciate the comments expressed in the Perspectives section in the July 2016 issue of the *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs* regarding relationships between the alcohol beverage industry and researchers in the field of alcohol use disorders (Adams & Livingstone, 2016; Andréasson & McCambridge, 2016a, 2016b; Martin et al., 2016; Tabakoff, 2016; Wilsnack et al., 2016). Of special interest was Andréasson and McCambridge's (2106b) final response acknowledging that the industry is not monolithic, and that more data are required to fully understand the liabilities and assets of research funded by the alcohol beverage industry.

Several of the Perspectives expressed concern that the INEBRIA statement presents an extreme interpretation of what might be read as the "evils" of this for-profit industry. Of course, I recognize that, in any cooperative effort, it is important that researchers set non-interference guidelines regarding how subjects are selected, the methods used, and the presentation of results. However, I believe it is extreme to imply that any form of engagement with the alcohol industry is too risky to consider, especially with the implication that the opinions stated by INEBRIA should be followed by everyone in the alcohol field.

I appreciate the sincerity that went into those comments but have a different view of the issue that comes from my own life philosophy and experiences. In forming opinions, I am guided by data and believe the available information doesn't support a statement that having any relationships with the alcohol industry is to be avoided. My experiences are consistent with that skepticism. In 1988, I received support for a pilot study from the Alcohol Beverage Medical Research Foundation and have subsequently encouraged young investigators to do the same. The Foundation was highly professional and adhered to the doctrine of non-interference with all aspects of research protocols, interpretations of results, and presentation of data.

I've had similar experiences regarding the Anheuser-Busch Foundation sponsorship of an educational program aimed at young medical school faculty around the country and funded through the Regents of the University of Cali-

fornia. The program works to improve abilities of health care deliverers, especially physicians and psychologists, to recognize alcohol problems in patients, confront those issues, and, if appropriate, help the individual achieve abstinence. The website for the Alcohol Medical Scholars Program states the funding source, and the ~80 participants over the years have produced almost 100 lectures for use without cost by teachers in health care-related programs worldwide. Anheuser-Busch has never attended our meetings, has never interfered with selection of participants, has not expressed opinions about lecture topics developed by scholars, and has not interfered with the program—nor have they used the program for publicity.

Well-meaning people can have different opinions. The vehemence with which those views are held is sometimes the inverse of the amount of data available to support one side or the other. When that happens, it can be important for each side to respect the views of the other, to gather data, and to keep talking. I look forward to more discussions on this topic, but, in the meantime, I'm grateful for the support for research and education on alcohol topics made available through programs underwritten by the beverage industry.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

Marc Schuckit is a distinguished professor of psychiatry at the University of California Medical School, in San Diego, CA, where he is engaged in research regarding genetic influences in alcohol use disorders; co-morbidity between alcohol, other drug, and psychiatric disorders; and prevention of heavy drinking in individuals carrying a predisposition toward alcohol-related conditions. He is the director of the Alcohol Medical Scholars Program and received a small grant from the Alcohol Beverage Medical Research Foundation in 1988. Throughout his career, he has received research support from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

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