

Review
on
ALCOHOL AND FLYING

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THE authors have highlighted various aspects of alcohol and how it might affect the flyer.

Psychologically, alcoholism may result from disturbance and deprivation in early life. There is no single personality configuration in alcoholism. In the Armed Forces a person going into alcoholism is invariably noticed by the authorities and action is taken. However, this symposium is mainly concerned with the flyer who is more or less a social drinker. How does alcohol affect his performance in the air? One of the authors has propounded that an experienced flyer should not be handicapped by a little alcohol. However, some experiments have proved that crude performance tests like type-writing and target practice are adversely affected by alcohol; and hence there is little doubt that the highly complex task of flying is markedly

disturbed even with comparatively low blood alcohol levels. The resultant 'hangover' of a moderate drinking bout is known to reduce task performance and increase vestibular organ sensitivity and reduce 'g' tolerance. Another author has pointed this out and commented that an alcohol hangover could have been a precipitating factor in two fatal aircraft accidents.

In conclusion therefore, it may be said that alcohol and flying are not compatible. Low blood alcohol levels which may be compatible with ground based activity like driving a motor vehicle, may prove to be a serious handicap in the flight environment, and endanger flight safety. The Unit Medical Officer, by his understanding of the effects of the drug and of the flight environment, could prove invaluable in promoting flight safety.