

RYN, Z. /Poland/:

MEDICAL ASPECTS OF ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

AT HIGH ALTITUDES

On the grounds of his own psychiatric observations made during an expedition to the Andes in 1973/74, the author came to the following conclusions:

- at high altitudes /3800 m above sea level/ the consumption of small doses of alcohol can lead to severe intoxication;
- in three cases out of the nine which were observed, an atypical intoxication with amnesia, a tendency to fall into a coma, and orthostatic circulatory disorders were noticed;
- the after-effects of alcohol lasted for three to five days and their intensity was greater than at lower altitudes;
- after a single dose of alcohol at 3800 m above sea level, a significant abatement of muscle power, an inability to perform physical or intellectual work for about two weeks, were observed;
- it is not possible to eliminate possibility that drinking alcohol in high mountains may account for sudden death.

These data speak for the prohibition of drinking at high altitudes.

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