



## ‘Bravo to the EECI and the Communication Committee!’

*Mickael Naassila—President of ESBRA*



**D**ear members, dear friends, In these difficult times it is crucial to strengthen the links between scientists, cooperation between the peoples of different countries and between addiction societies. In this context, our society is participating in the European Federation of Addiction Societies (EUFAS - <https://www.eufas.net>).

On behalf of the ESBRA board, I would like to say that it is a great pleasure to launch this first newsletter and to see the dynamism with which the members of the EECI and Communication Committee have been involved both in writing this newsletter and in launching our communication on social networks ([@esbra\\_society](https://twitter.com/esbra_society)). We count on all the members of the society to feed the different sections of this newsletter in order to have information from all countries and from all alcohol research laboratories in Europe. Please feel free to send relevant information also to feed

our website since we recently created a web page for job announcements and it would be interesting to create other sections such as for example research projects and other national societies on alcohol research.

Our newsletter aims at exchanging information to better know ourselves, our research activities and also to discuss about debates and controversial issues that animate our field of research. The board is counting on all of ESBRA members to enrich this new communication tool and also to disseminate it as widely as possible to our scientific and institutional community in order to improve the influence of our society with other societies, as we are fortunate to work on a very cross-cutting theme that is of interest not only to the biomedical field but also to public health. Our research activities aim to advance knowledge in order to improve the treatment of all alcohol-related diseases and we have to keep in mind that Europe is the heaviest drinking region of the world.

Another important piece of news is that our journal Alcohol & Alcoholism has remarkably increased its impact factor in 2021 to 3.9, which is a great incentive to publish in our society's journal in a context where competition has become very important and where publication fees are often exorbitant.

The board wished to create the ESBRA Early Career Investigators (EECI) to allow young (and less young) researchers to

create a network to exchange, help in their career, and facilitate collaborations. We wish to help in the realisation of actions in support of young researchers as we have already initiated in the last few years with notably numerous symposia reserved for EECI or the organisation of an e-fall school on alcohol research last year. We will help as much as possible in the organisation of social events.

I would also like to remind you how important it is to mobilise the whole alcohol research community in Europe to join our society and also to participate in our meetings, it is vital. We need your input and WE NEED YOU!

Why coming to the ESBRA meeting? The first time I attended an ESBRA, it was in 2011 in Vienna, I had the chance to meet the [founder president of ESBRA Prof. Roger Nordmann](#), who prompted me to become ESBRA member and to be involved in the life of our society. At my first ESBRA meeting, I discovered that the biggest interest was the place given to translational research and also the large community of alcohol researchers from different fields such as brain and liver. Since that meeting, I have attended every subsequent one.

See you soon in Kraków for our joint meeting with ISBRA, for which I would also like to thank our Congress presidents Prof. Rosana Camarini and Prof. Marcin Wojnar.

# ESBRA Early-career Investigators (EECI) Committee

Elena Palma—Chair of ESBRA EECI

The EECI Committee was established in February 2022 after the idea of ESBRA President Prof. Mickael Naassila to improve the promotion of our Society. The EECI Committee is currently formed by 9 ESBRA members with different backgrounds and interests, coming from 7 European countries but with a common goal.

The ESBRA ECI Committee aims to:

*“Our mission is to enhance engagement and create opportunities for collaborations within the ESBRA community to further advance alcohol-related biomedical research in Europe.”*

- promote research conducted by ESBRA members, especially by early-career scientists and clinicians within the Society
- enhance the visibility of ESBRA through social media platforms
- spread communication to facilitate collaborations, through a periodic Newsletter
- provide regular opportunities for networking amongst EECI members
- boost educational activities in alcohol-related research
- attract new European ECI with interest in this field to be part of ESBRA

We are just at the beginning of our journey, but for 2022 we plan to:

- Create a Social Media team to tell you more about our Society, EECI events and the great research done by ESBRA members -follow us on **Twitter** [@esbra\\_society](#), **LinkedIn** and visit our **website** <https://www.esbra.com/>
- Launch a quarterly **ESBRA Newsletter** (if you read this... we nailed it!)
- Organise an **Early-career investigators Symposium** at the 2<sup>nd</sup> World Congress on Alcohol and Alcoholism (joint meeting of ESBRA-ISBRA) on **Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> September 9.00-10.30**. Do not hesitate to register for the conference <https://www.isbra-esbra2022.com/>.
- Get together at the **EECI social networking event** on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> September in Kraków
- Release new educational activities in 2023... stay tuned!

## How to become one of us

Every year we aim to attract and recruit new members to become part of the Committee. The chairperson will be elected by the committee and will lead for 2 years. At least 6 months of mandate will overlap between new and current members/chair to facilitate a smooth transition and running of all activities and to guarantee continuity.

Our aim is to have a representation of each European Country and discipline of alcohol-related research, from diagnostic tools to interventions for alcohol-use disorders, alcohol-related liver or neurological injury, experimental models for basic and translational science, etc.

Please get in touch if you want to be involved in the EECI Committee! It will add to your professional and personal development, it is interesting... and it is fun!

The EECI Committee and planned activities will be presented during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World Congress on Alcohol and Alcoholism (joint meeting of ESBRA-ISBRA) in Kraków in September 2022. Don't miss it!

## CURRENT EECI COMMITTEE

**Dr Elena Palma**, UK  
*EECI Committee Chair*



**Dr Antonio Riva**, UK  
**Dr Ruchi Bansal**, The Netherlands  
*Editors, ESBRA Newsletter*



**Dr Mohsan Subhani**, UK  
**Dr Olli Kärkkäinen**, Finland  
*Social media team*



**Dr Esi Domi**, Italy  
**Dr Estelle Barbier**, Sweden  
**Dr Jérôme Jeanblanc**, France  
**Dr Marina Vetrova**, Russia  
*Committee members*



**Johannes Müller**, Germany  
*ESBRA Office Coordinator*

**M**arcin Wojnar, MD, PhD is a Professor of Psychiatry and the Chair of the Department of Psychiatry, Medical University of Warsaw, Poland. He also holds a position as an Adjunct Professor at the University of Michigan Department of Psychiatry in Ann Arbor, USA. In 2019-2020, he was the Dean of Medical School at the Medical University of Warsaw. He is an active member of the Polish Psychiatric Association, Vice-President of the European Society for Biomedical Research on Alcoholism (ESBRA), and the founder and past president of the Polish Society of Research on Addictions. He investigates the relationships between impulsive suicidality and alcohol, treatment outcomes in alcohol dependence,

and electrophysiological and genetic markers in alcohol-dependent individuals.

*What was the highlight or turning point in your career?*

An essential point in my career was in the mid-90s, during my PhD, when I took part in a big study on alcohol withdrawal in our department in Warsaw. Many alcohol-dependent patients were coming to the hospital for detoxification. Many had complicated withdrawal and we analysed the determinants of severity of alcohol withdrawal and the risk factors associated with these complications, what became main research

questions of my PhD dissertation. Few years after this study, I was invited as a research fellow at the University of Michigan Addiction Research Center. I received a lot of help, support and training and met my mentors: Robert Zucker, Kirk Brower and Fred Blow. The turning point in my career was when I returned to Poland, applied, and received a substantial grant. This funding allowed me to organise a new unit within the Department of Psychiatry, invite a fantastic team and put together the treatment and research programs. Initially, I was surprised when I obtained the grant as my project was purely dedicated to treating alcohol dependence and this type of research was not very supported at the time. Later, in 2008 we established the Polish Society of Research on Addictions, with around 100 people throughout Poland with a common interest in alcohol and substance use disorders.

***“One of my main achievements has been attracting a fantastic group of young and talented researchers devoted to alcohol-related research and very active and kind. I still work with them after 20 years.”***

*Do you think Europe is a good place to do alcohol-related research?*

Europe is a perfect place to do alcohol-related research but... maybe not in every location. The biggest challenge in our country was the lack of support from the government or other parties to fund research projects on addiction, broadly speaking, not only alcohol.

*Why do you think alcohol research was not funded?*

One of the reasons is that in our country and others of the Eastern Bloc, alcohol use disorders were not perceived as a disease or a medical condition but as a personal or moral problem. Also, as the Communist government profited from taxes on alcohol, there was no interest



in limiting alcohol use or having drinking limitations. New policies have recently been introduced but with a lot of struggle because there is still a strong lobby for alcohol. Some restrictions have been set over the last couple of years, following the regulations of the European Union.

*Do you have any advice for early career investigators in this field of research?*

Meeting a good mentor is crucial. Going outside of your own institution. This is very important: going abroad, to another country, to another institution, to get a new experience. This is something that opens your eyes and moves you forward. The opportunity not only to participate in different projects but also to learn from others, from different traditions, other experiences as well as different ways of thinking and perceiving the world. Indeed, it is with great excitement that we are organising the joint ISBRA-ESBRA conference in Kraków. This face-to-face meeting will give us many occasions to meet people, learn about opportunities and projects, and start future collaborations. Not only the scientific program is key, but equal, if not even more important, is the networking part. This is exactly what helped me to start my career.

**Prof Marcin Wojnar**  
**contact details**

Marcin Wojnar, MD, PhD  
Department of Psychiatry  
Medical University of Warsaw  
Warsaw, Poland

Email: [marcin.wojnar@wum.edu.pl](mailto:marcin.wojnar@wum.edu.pl)



Photo by Kamil Gliwiński on Unsplash

Working with...



**Andrzej Jakubczyk**

Andrzej Jakubczyk, MD, PhD is a psychiatrist and Associate Professor at the Department of Psychiatry, Medical University of Warsaw, Poland. His research interests and work concentrate on factors affecting decision making, emotion regulation as well as behavioural control in individuals with alcohol use disorder, with a specific focus on bodily sensations (physical pain and interoception).

*I have been bound with Prof. Wojnar throughout my whole professional career, since medical studies, when I was a member of the psychiatric student research group. After finishing medical school, I worked as a resident in Psychiatry in the clinical ward led by prof. Wojnar, later as his PhD student preparing a dissertation on determinants and significance of impulsivity in alcohol-dependent individuals, and then (until now) as his assistant at the Department of Psychiatry, Medical University of Warsaw.*

*In my case, research work stimulates my self-development in understanding the mechanisms of psychiatric disorders and enables more efficient work in clinical practice, both in interpersonal and substantive contexts. Also, research activities serve as a way of diversifying indi-*

*vidual resources, which might be helpful in avoiding professional burnout. Last but not least, research in fields like addictions, where there is still a lot to describe and discover, is exciting. This is extremely interesting and rewarding in opposition to clinical practice, where lack of success often becomes a part of daily routine. An important part of the joy of scientific work comes from being a member of my harmonious team; this is also an interpersonal experience. Not surprisingly, I owe my interest in the field of alcohol use disorders to Prof. Wojnar, who at the beginning of my scientific career provided me with modern tools of scientific research in this area and encouraged and enabled a very fruitful collaboration with colleagues from the University of Michigan. Simultaneously, my psychiatric practice convinced me that harmful alcohol use remains one of the most significant problems affecting both somatic and mental health in the Polish population and that alcohol drinking should be perceived in the broad context of various important human needs and desires. With this perspective, and also given clearly poor outcomes of treatment of alcohol use disorder, there is still a clear gap in current knowledge and a lot to be done in the field of determinants and treatment of alcohol use problems.*

Summer has just finished and several products were distributed in Europe with the promises of anti-hangover properties. Lately, two products received large media coverage, namely Myrkl<sup>®</sup>, pills composed of 2 gut-friendly bacteria and an amino acid (L-cysteine), sold through a website in 11 European countries. The other product is named Alcool<sup>®</sup>, composed of a Korean pear juice, curcuma, vitamins, goji berry, ginseng and other ingredients and only sold in France. Their marketers claim that in order to reduce hangover symptoms these products should be consumed before a party or an event during which the client knows that he/she will drink alcohol.

So what is the problem with such products?

First, the "evidences" used as proof of efficacy. For the Myrkl<sup>®</sup> pills, the authors claimed on the packaging that the compound is scientifically tested. However, the study presented as a proof (Pfütznér et al. 2022) evaluated the levels of ethanol in the blood after a single drink with or without pre-treatment with the Myrkl<sup>®</sup> pills. As noted by Dr Dhanda (see its article in [The Conversation](#)), several pitfalls are raised after reading this study. The most important one is that the protocol used is different than what it is proposed to the clients. Therefore, the study offers no proof of efficacy of what is marketed to consumers by the company. In regard to the French product, the Korean pear juice (nashi pear) is supposed to have been proven to have an effect on hangover symptoms based on a "study" led by the Australian institute of Research CSIRO in 2015. The issue here is that this preliminary study never led to any published article and that even [this preliminary](#)

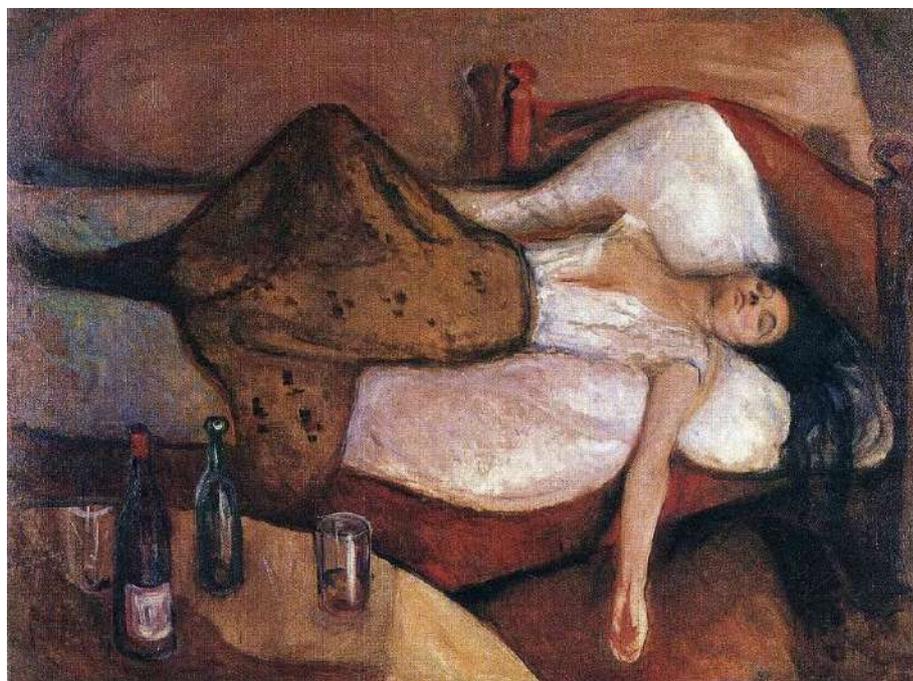
[report is not available anymore](#) on the CSIRO website. Thus, for both products, no solid scientific proofs of efficacy has been published.

Second, the marketing used by both companies is questionable with regard to public health issues linked to alcohol consumption. Indeed, despite discreet warnings, to say the least, about consequences of alcohol intoxication, implicit invitation to consume larger amounts of alcohol than anticipated is delivered through either "scientific" validation or by inviting to enjoy their party without worrying about hangover consequences. In France, the Alcool<sup>®</sup> bottles are sold through their website and also in pharmacies, thereby suggesting implicit validation by association with healthcare professionals.

Third, the medium and long term consequences of alcohol consumption do not seem to exist in the world of these ven-

dors. It seems that hangovers are almost the only negative consequence of alcohol consumption. The language and marketing elements of these salesmen implicitly incite to consume more alcohol than necessary and therefore deviate from the governmental recommendations. Moreover, Myrkl<sup>®</sup>'s customer service explains to unhappy clients that the product only works when it precedes consumption that does not exceed government recommendations. In other words, consumption at a level that is not likely to induce hangover.

To conclude, the different meta-analyses conducted recently show that the level of evidence for products to reduce the symptoms of hangover is overall very low (Pittler et al., 2005; Roberts et al., 2021; Jayawardena et al., 2017). The best cure to prevent hangover (and other consequences) remains abstinence or reduction of alcohol consumption.



"The day after", Edvard Munch | [Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons]

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# Joint Meeting of ISBRA and ESBRA

## 2<sup>nd</sup> World Congress on Alcohol and Alcoholism

Johannes Müller—ESBRA Office

This year, the European Society for Biomedical Research on Alcoholism (ESBRA) hosts together with the International Society for Biomedical Research on Alcoholism (ISBRA) the jointly organized 2<sup>nd</sup> World Congress on Alcohol and Alcoholism from September 17-20, in Kraków, Poland. The meeting goes under the topic: “From bench to bedside: mechanisms and novel treatment options for alcohol-related disorder”. It will be a hybrid meeting with the option for in-person attendance or participation via an online platform. The congress will have 34 symposia organized by alcohol researchers from 32 different countries and 5 different continents. As always in ESBRA and ISBRA meetings, the talks encompass a wide area from addiction research, neurology and hepatology and range from epidemiological and sociological topics over clinical talks to molecular biology and genetics. There will be also six keynote lectures given by internationally renowned international expert. Mariso Roberto (USA) will be speaking about “The synaptic role of the stress system and cytokines in Alcohol Use Disorder”, Bernd Schnabel (Germany) speaking about “The gut microbiome as a disease

driver and therapeutic target in alcohol-associated liver disease”, Henry Kranzler (USA) giving his talk about “Genetics and pharmacogenetics of alcohol use disorder” and Rainer Spanagel (Germany) about “25 years of ups and downs in preclinical treatment development for alcohol relapse”. As part of the ISBRA Tabakoff award lectures, Susumu Higuchi (Japan) will be speaking about “Implication of inactive ALDH2 on alcohol consumption, intoxication and related harms, and other disorders” and Helmut Seitz (Germany) “Cytochrome P4502E1 and alcoholic liver disease: a success story from bench to bedside”. The next ESBRA Nordmann award, instead, will be awarded during the next Annual ESBRA Meeting in 2023.

Kraków, the former royal capital city of Poland is one of the best preserved medieval cities in Europe and UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage and therefore offers a lot of opportunities for sightseeing and exploration of the Polish culture. Participants of the meeting will be also able to join the Gala dinner on Monday Sept. 19 in the Wieliczka Salt Mine UNESCO Site. You can find links to the congress website, registration and accommodation below.



Image by Dimitris Vetsikas from Pixabay.

### ESBRA list of awards

#### ‘Nordmann Award’

The [ESBRA-‘Nordmann Award’](#) is awarded to a young scientist for significant scientific contribution to biomedical research on alcoholism. The award consists of 3000 EUR granted during the ESBRA Nordmann Award Meeting. The next Nordmann award will be awarded during the Annual ESBRA meeting in 2023. Weblink: [ESBRA-Nordmann Award](#).

#### ‘Helmut Seitz Award’

The ESBRA-‘Helmut Seitz Award’ is granted to a well-established researcher who has contributed strongly to the understanding of alcohol-related and alcohol-associated diseases or the development of treatment strategies in alcohol-associated diseases. The award consists of 25000 EUR donated by The Manfred Lautenschläger Foundation, Heidelberg, Germany, and will be granted during the Annual ESBRA meeting in 2023. Weblink: [ESBRA-Helmut Seitz Award](#).

#### Young Investigator Travel Grants and Poster Awards

Young Investigator Travel Grants and Poster Awards are given to young investigators (under 36 years of age) during the regular biannual ESBRA congress and the ESBRA Nordmann award meetings. Selected speakers will receive a contribution for travel/living expenses and Conference registration fee. Applicants should submit their CV and an abstract of the presentation by email to [office@esbra.com](mailto:office@esbra.com). During each meeting, ESBRA will also grant Poster Awards to be selected during the conferences. Weblink: [Travel Grants and Poster Awards](#).

#### ‘Lifetime Achievement’ and ‘Lifetime Recognition’ Awards

The ESBRA ‘Lifetime Achievement Award’ is granted to researchers in appreciation for their lifetime work on alcoholism. The ESBRA ‘Lifetime Recognition Award’ is granted to researchers in recognition of their academic achievements not exclusively related to alcoholism. These awards are given upon decision of the ESBRA Board. Weblinks: [ESBRA lifetime achievement award](#) and [ESBRA lifetime recognition award](#).

**Congress website:** <https://www.isbra-esbra2022.com>

**Registration:** <https://www.isbra-esbra2022.com/registration>

**Accommodation:** <https://www.isbra-esbra2022.com/Accommodation>

# contacts & links



European Society for Biomedical Research on Alcoholism

**How to become a member of ESBRA:**

<https://www.esbra.com/membership>

**ESBRA calendar:**

<https://www.esbra.com/calendar>

**Job opportunities:**

<https://www.esbra.com/job-announcements>

**ESBRA awards:**

<https://www.esbra.com/awards>

**Further links:**

<https://www.esbra.com/links>

**Website:** <https://www.esbra.com/>

**Email:** [office@esbra.com](mailto:office@esbra.com)

**Phone:** +49 1792650322

**Main contact:**

Johannes Müller

Krankenhaus Salem

ESBRA office & Zentrum für Alkoholforschung und Leberkrankheiten

Zeppelinstr. 11-33

69121 Heidelberg, Germany



**ESBRA Board**

**Mickael NAASSILA**, France  
[mickael.naassila@u-picardie.fr](mailto:mickael.naassila@u-picardie.fr)

*President*

**Marcin WOJNAR**, Poland  
[marcin.wojnar@wum.edu.pl](mailto:marcin.wojnar@wum.edu.pl)

*Vice President*

**Karoline LACKNER**, Austria  
[karoline.lackner@medunigraz.at](mailto:karoline.lackner@medunigraz.at)

*Secretary*

**Shilpa CHOKSHI**, UK  
[s.chokshi@researchinliver.org.uk](mailto:s.chokshi@researchinliver.org.uk)

*Treasurer*

**Markus HEILIG**, Sweden  
[markus.heilig@liu.se](mailto:markus.heilig@liu.se)

**Giovanni ADDOLORATO**, Italy  
[giovanni.addolorato@unicatt.it](mailto:giovanni.addolorato@unicatt.it)

**Evgeny KRUPITSKY**, Russia  
[kruenator@gmail.com](mailto:kruenator@gmail.com)

*Board members*

**Sebastian MUELLER**, Germany  
[sebastian.mueller@urz.uni-heidelberg.de](mailto:sebastian.mueller@urz.uni-heidelberg.de)

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