



SUBSTANCE ABUSE LIBRARIANS AND INFORMATION SPECIALISTS

SALIS P.O. Box 9513 Berkeley, CA 94709-0513 U.S.A. (510) 642-5208 FAX (510) 642-7175
SALIS@arg.org <http://SALIS.org>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE June 25, 2004	Contacts: Sheila Lacroix (SALIS) Sheila_Lacroix@camh.net Andrea Mitchell (SALIS) amitchell@arg.org Kerstin Stenius (ISAJE) kerstin.stenius@stakes.fi Jacek Moskalewicz (KBS) moskalew@ipin.edu.pl
--	--

Press Release

NIAAA Ignores Constituencies' Concerns: Shuts Down the Alcohol and Alcohol Problems Science (ETOH) Database

NIAAA (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism) has shut down one of its most valued research assets, the ETOH database, relied on by researchers, policy makers, and advocates in the alcohol field worldwide. SALIS (Substance Abuse Librarians and Information Specialists) asked NIAAA to provide a process for constituency input and review, but was denied any role in the decision-making process. Joining SALIS in the charge to save ETOH are two leading international organizations of alcohol researchers and editors, the Kettil Bruun Society for Social and Epidemiological Research on Alcohol (KBS) and the International Society of Addiction Journal Editors (ISAJE).

ETOH is the world's most comprehensive alcohol science database which provides records and abstracts to most of the major research and practice literature of the alcohol field. Yet NIAAA discontinued funding for ETOH January 1, 2004, without any formal announcement. It based the decision in part on an evaluation of the database, conducted by a competitor of the company contracted to maintain ETOH, and failed to circulate the evaluation or seek comment from the field. When SALIS became aware of the decision, it alerted alcohol researchers and other NIAAA constituencies. NIAAA received letters from major research institutions and research societies as well as from dozens of prominent researchers from around the world protesting the decision.

SALIS members are in perhaps the best position to assess ETOH's importance to the alcohol field, as well its specificity and scope. Their daily use of ETOH highlights the lack of alternative sources with an equal depth of detail compared with the information ETOH provides. SALIS presented a position paper on the "Value of ETOH" (<http://salis.org/ETOHPositionPaper.pdf>) to the NIAAA Advisory Council in February 2004. Several Council members requested further review and recommended that the issue be a "regular agenda item at the next meeting."

NIAAA officials promised to make the internal ETOH evaluation available to SALIS. Ting Kai Li, the NIAAA director, also later agreed to meet with a SALIS representative to discuss the matter, but when SALIS tried to make an appointment before the May 27th meeting, he was unavailable. To this date SALIS has not received the ETOH evaluation, in spite of an Freedom of Information Act request to NIAAA..

At the NIAAA Advisory Council Meeting on May 27, 2004, a Council Working Group announced that it had met by conference call and decided to support Director T. K. Li's decision to de-fund ETOH. SALIS had come to the Advisory Council Meeting expecting to participate in an informed discussion of ETOH's future because an NIAAA official had contacted SALIS just two days earlier and provided a packet of materials on ETOH related to the discussion. Instead, SALIS learned at the Meeting that the Working Group had peremptorily decided to replace ETOH with an "ETOH Webpage," a compilation of links to general academic and other databases which index alcohol literature. SALIS contends that a "list of links" is a poor substitution for ETOH, and that this suggestion demonstrates NIAAA's lack of awareness of ETOH's strengths and usefulness to searchers as a fully-indexed specialty database.

SALIS is not giving up on the campaign to save ETOH and to provide opportunities for those in the alcohol field who rely on this invaluable resource to participate in decisions about ETOH's future. ETOH is an international resource and one of the most valuable assets NIAAA provides to the field; its cost represents a tiny fraction of NIAAA's total budget. As emphasized throughout this process, SALIS is eager to collaborate with NIAAA or other organizations in an effort to maintain ETOH, improve its cost-effectiveness, and expand its use of state-of-the-art information technologies.

For more information and documentation about the value of ETOH, visit the Save ETOH web site at: <http://salis.org/SaveETOH.htm>.

#