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# The U.S., Canada, and the questionable alcohol recommendations

Controversy surrounds proposed alcohol consumption recommendations

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Recent revelations surrounding George Koob, the director of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, have sparked debate in the U.S. The matter under scrutiny is the consideration of revising American drinking guidelines to be in line with

those recommended in a report by the Canadian Centre for Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA). This report advises that individuals who choose to consume alcohol should limit their intake to a maximum of two drinks weekly. However, this suggestion has been met with skepticism and criticism from both sides of the border.

The CCSA research claims that consumption beyond two drinks on a weekly basis poses significant health risks. However, this recommendation has faced staunch criticism from experts within the scientific community. The International Scientific Forum on Alcohol Research, for instance, has described the CCSA report as a collection of "selected studies of low scientific validity" which align with the authors' predetermined views. This perspective is further underscored by the remarks of 16 eminent Canadian harm reduction specialists, professors, and researchers, who believe that the CCSA report could mislead the public by overemphasizing the risks associated with even minimal alcohol consumption.

Another layer of controversy surrounding the Canadian guidelines pertains to the researchers' affiliations. The report, authored by Tim Stockwell, Timothy Naimi, and Adam Sherk, has been linked to Movendi – an international temperance organization known for advocating a zero-consumption stance on alcohol. Originating as "The Order of Good Templars" in the 19th century, Movendi underwent a rebranding in 2020. What makes Movendi's role in this debate even more noteworthy is its collaboration with global health bodies like the World Health Organization.

These affiliations have raised eyebrows due to the nature of Movendi's objectives. A glance at their website reveals a pledge taken by members, committing them to lead lives devoid of alcohol and other intoxicants. While individual choices regarding substance use are personal and should be respected, concerns arise when these personal beliefs appear to shape scientific research, especially when such research has the potential to influence government policies.

Drawing a parallel, consider a hypothetical situation wherein the Canadian government solicits a research study on meat consumption. If it were later revealed that the study's authors had strong affiliations with staunch vegan groups or anti-meat organizations, the impartiality and validity of the findings would naturally come under scrutiny.

Similarly, given the aforementioned affiliations and criticisms of the CCSA report, it raises questions about the extent to which personal biases might have influenced the recommendations.

While Canada has set many policy precedents that the United States might consider emulating, the CCSA's alcohol guidelines, mired in controversy and questioned for their scientific validity, may not be among them. It remains to be seen how the Agriculture Department will respond, but the complexities of the issue mandate a thorough and impartial review.