

# Genetic Research on Addiction

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Ethics, the Law, and Public Health

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## Ethics, the Law, and Public Health

Edited by

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## Preface

This volume has a dual focus: identifying the ethical issues and requirements related to carrying out genetically based research on addiction and specifying the ethical, legal, and public policy implications of the interpretation, translation, and application of this research. It is hoped that the book will contribute to more ethically sensitive research and more socially responsible policies.

A motivating factor in the development of the volume was the desire to fill an important gap in the literature. It has been thought that a better understanding of the genetic contributions to addiction could lead to more effective drugs to assist in cessation of alcohol and drug use with fewer adverse side effects and that genotyping could better match patients to existing pharmacological treatments for addiction. These hopes have fueled medical investment in this field of research. Like other types of behavioral genetics research, the manner in which genetics research associated with addiction is conducted, interpreted to the public, and then translated into clinical practice and policy initiatives raises important ethical, social, and legal issues. Given the sensitivity of genetic research, its potential for stigmatization, its implications beyond the individual subject for the family and in some cases a broader community of membership, there is a need to guard against genetic research being misunderstood and misused. Yet there has been little literature exploring the ethical requirements of this research and its implications for public policy.

A grant from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) of the US National Institutes of Health awarded to the Alcohol Research Center of University of Connecticut Health Center, for “Dissemination, and Educational Activities Related to Alcohol Research,” afforded me the time to work on this volume. I have also had financial assistance from the Alcohol Research Center for the preparation of the volume. I would like to thank Professor Victor Hesselbrock, the Scientific Director of the Alcohol Research Center, for his support.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank other people who assisted with the development of this volume. I am grateful to Professor Thomas Babor, the Chairman of the Department of Community Medicine and Health Care at the University of Connecticut Health Center, who generously gave of his time and expertise. The role of the contributing authors of the chapters in the volume is obvious. Without their time and effort it would not have been possible to prepare and develop a multi-disciplinary volume incorporating a wide range of expertise. I would like especially to thank Jonathan M. Kaplan and Adrian Carter for their participation in the process of drafting the guidelines. I am also appreciative of the assistance of Joanna Chamberlin, my editor at Cambridge University Press, and Dr. Matthew Davies of Out of House Publishing Solutions who oversaw the copyediting, typesetting, and proofreading of the volume.