

Historically, there is ample evidence that drug abuse antedated drug therapy, just as toxicology paved the way for pharmacology. Primitive man seems to have been more interested in poisons than medicines; even Hippocrates, although he recommended natural salicylates from willow trees for eye disease and childbirth, considered most drugs essentially useless. But when the Greeks wished to dispose of Socrates, they had a most effective herb. Today, in the case of amphetamines, this tape is being run backwards with increasing speed. Pharmacology is reverting to toxicology. We are now compelled to examine the consequences of the fact that the use and abuse of this truly addicting and dangerous drug is now quite widespread.

In 1887 the German pharmacologist L. Edeleano first synthesized phenylisopronylamine, but he was uninterested in exploring the pharmacological properties of the drug which would eventually become famous as "Penzedrine," and put this extraordinary stimulant back on the shelf. Not until 1910 did G. Parker and Sir H. H. Dale investigate the effects on experimental animals of this and a series of closely related chemical compounds, which they called "sympathomimetic amines." However, no one in America or England grasped the implications of their findings for another 17 years. George Piness, who was seeking a synthetic ephedrine substitute was aware of Edeleano's discovery and suggested to Gordon Alles that he look for a synthetic amine substitute for ephedrine. Alles confirmed Piness' hunch in 1927 by concluding that the most effective such substitute was the original amphetamine synthesized by Edeleano.