



UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO PARÁ  
INSTITUTO DE CIÊNCIAS BIOLÓGICAS  
PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM FARMACOLOGIA E BIOQUÍMICA

AMANDA DO NASCIMENTO RODRIGUES

**EFEITOS DO EXERCÍCIO FÍSICO AERÓBICO DE  
INTENSIDADE MODERADA SOBRE PARÂMETROS  
BIOQUÍMICOS E MORFOLÓGICOS DA MEDULA ESPINAL  
DE RATOS EXPOSTOS AO ETANOL NO MODELO *BINGE  
DRINKING***

BELÉM-PA

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## RESUMO

O etanol (EtOH) é uma droga psicotrópica, lícita, porém bastante aceita e consumida em grande parte do mundo, configurando um problema de saúde pública e individual. Entre os adultos jovens, o padrão mais comum de consumo é o *binge drinking*, sendo considerado consumo de fim de semana, podendo ocasionar alterações biopsicossociais e riscos iminentes de vida. Desta forma, objetivamos investigar os efeitos do treinamento físico de intensidade moderada, em esteira ergométrica para ratos, sobre os efeitos deletérios do EtOH na medula espinal. Para tal finalidade, foram utilizados 60 ratos Wistar machos com 90 dias de vida, divididos em quatro grupos experimentais: Grupo controle; Grupo treinado (animais treinados e tratados com água destilada); Grupo etanol (animais não treinados e tratados com doses de 3g/kg/dia de etanol, 20% p/v); e grupo etanol + treinado (animais treinados e expostos ao etanol). O exercício físico foi realizado em esteira rolante durante 5 dias por semana durante 4 semanas e todas as doses de EtOH e água destilada foram administradas por gavagem intragástrica (três dias por semana) em quatro ciclos de *binge*. Após o término do protocolo experimental, os animais foram eutanasiados para a coleta da medula espinal, avaliando os níveis da capacidade antioxidante equivalente ao Trolox (TEAC), conteúdo da glutatona reduzida (GSH) e peroxidação lipídica (LPO); como também a análise morfológica pela contagem de neurônios motores (NM). Nossos resultados demonstraram que o EtOH causou estresse oxidativo (EO) e dano oxidativo na medula espinal, o treinamento físico moderado minimizou as alterações induzidas pelo EtOH mediante a restauração dos níveis de GSH, entretanto, não podemos afirmar que houve neuroproteção em relação aos neurônios motores (NM) da medula espinal. O treinamento físico não preveniu a redução da densidade de NM no segmento cervical neste padrão de consumo - *binge drinking*, e não foram encontradas diferenças marcantes nos segmentos torácico e lombar. Portanto, estudos futuros e outras técnicas metodológicas serão necessários para esclarecer melhor essa questão da densidade de NM neste protocolo de treinamento físico moderado associado ao padrão de consumo de EtOH - *binge drinking*.

**Palavras-chave:** Etanol, *binge drinking*, treinamento físico moderado, medula espinal, estresse oxidativo.

## ABSTRACT

Ethanol (EtOH) is a licit psychotropic drug widely accepted and consumed throughout the world, constituting a public and individual health issue. Among young adults, the most common consumption pattern is binge drinking, characterized by weekend consumption, which can lead to biopsychosocial alterations and imminent life risks. Thus, we aimed to investigate the effects of moderate-intensity physical training on a treadmill for rats on the deleterious effects of EtOH on the spinal cord. For this purpose, 60 male Wistar rats aged 90 days were divided into four experimental groups: Control Group; Trained Group (animals trained and treated with distilled water); Ethanol Group (non-trained animals treated with doses of 3g/kg/day of ethanol, 20% w/v); and Ethanol + Trained Group (trained animals exposed to ethanol). Physical exercise was performed on a treadmill for 5 days a week for 4 weeks, and all EtOH and distilled water doses were administered via intragastric gavage (three days a week) in four binge cycles. After the end of the experimental protocol, the animals were euthanized to collect the spinal cord, assessing the Trolox equivalent antioxidant capacity (TEAC) levels, reduced glutathione (GSH) content, and lipid peroxidation (LPO); as well as morphological analysis through motor neuron (MN) counting. Our findings revealed that EtOH caused oxidative stress (OS) and oxidative damage in the spinal cord, moderate physical training minimized the changes induced by EtOH by restoring GSH levels, however, we cannot affirm that there was neuroprotection to motor neurons (MN) of the spinal cord. Physical training did not prevent the reduction of MN density in the cervical segment in this consumption pattern - binge drinking, and no marked differences were found in the thoracic and lumbar segments. Therefore, future studies and other methodological techniques are required to better clarify the MN density issue in this moderate physical training protocol associated with EtOH consumption pattern - binge drinking.

**Keywords:** Ethanol, binge drinking, moderate physical training, spinal cord, oxidative stress.

## LISTA DE ILUSTRAÇÕES

<b>Figure 1.</b> Study design. (a) experimental groups; (b) collection of biological material (spinal cord sectioned into regions: cervical, thoracic, and lumbar); (c) Oxidative biochemistry analysis (GSH, TEAC, and TBARS); (d) Morphological analysis by counting motor neurons in Hematoxylin and Eosin (HE); (e) Details of exposure to EtOH or physical training during the experimental period.....	23
<b>Figure 2.</b> Effect of binge-like EtOH intake and/or training on body weight. There was no significant difference among groups ( $n=15$ ). Results are expressed as mean $\pm$ standard error of the mean. Two-way ANOVA and Tukey post hoc test ( $p<0.05$ ).....	25
<b>Figure 3.</b> Oxidative biochemistry analyses ( $n=6$ ). (a) GSH; (b) TEAC; (c) TBARS. Results are expressed as a percentage (%) of control (mean $\pm$ standard error of the mean). Asterisks (*) indicate significant differences ( $p<0.05$ ). One-way ANOVA test followed by Tukey post hoc test.....	26
<b>Figure 4.</b> Representative HE-stained photomicrographs of the cervical segment of the spinal cord of rats (100 $\mu\text{m}$ scale bar). (A) control group; (B) training group; (C) EtOH group, and (D) training + EtOH group. (E) Graph of MN density in each group ( $n=9$ ) expressed as mean $\pm$ standard error of the mean of the number of cells counted per field. Black arrows indicate motor neurons. Asterisk (*) indicates a significant difference (One-way ANOVA and Tukey post hoc test, $p<0.05$ ).....	27
<b>Figure 5.</b> Representative HE-stained photomicrographs of the thoracic segment of the spinal cord of rats (100 $\mu\text{m}$ scale bar). (A) control group; (B) training group; (C) EtOH group, and (D) training + EtOH group. (E) Graph of MN density in each group ( $n=9$ ) expressed as mean $\pm$ standard error of the mean of the number of cells counted per field. Black arrows indicate motor neurons.....	27



**Figure 6.** Representative HE-stained photomicrographs of the lumbar segment of the spinal cord of rats (100  $\mu\text{m}$  scale bar). **(A)** control group; **(B)** training group; **(C)** EtOH group, and **(D)** training + EtOH group. **(E)** Graph of MN density in each group ( $n=9$ ) expressed as mean  $\pm$  standard error of the mean of the number of cells counted per field. Black arrows indicate motor neurons. Asterisk (\*) indicates a significant difference (One-way ANOVA and Tukey post hoc test,  $p<0.05$ )..... 28

## LISTA DE SIGLAS

**ADH** - Álcool Desidrogenase

**ALDH** - Aldeído Desidrogenase

**BD** - *Binge Drinking*

**BAC** - *Blood Alcohol Concentration*

**BPE** - Beber Pesado Episódico

**CISA** - Centro de Informações Sobre Saúde e Álcool

**EO** - Estresse Oxidativo

**EROs** - Espécies Reativas de Oxigênio

**EtOH** - Etanol

**GSH** - Glutathiona Reduzida

**HE** - Hematoxilina e Eosina

**IPEC** - Inteligência em Pesquisa e Consultoria

**LPO** - Lipoperoxidação

**ME** - Medula Espinal

**MEOS** - Sistema Mitocondrial de Oxidação do Etanol

**NIAAA** - *National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (USA)*

**NM** - Neurônios Motores

**O<sub>2</sub>** - Oxigênio

**OMS** - Organização Mundial de Saúde

**SEMO** - Sistema de Enzimas Microssomais Oxidativas

**SNC** - Sistema Nervoso Central

**TBARs** - Substâncias Reativas ao Ácido Tiobarbitúrico

**TEAC** - Capacidade Antioxidante Total Relativa ao Trolox

**TF** - Treinamento Físico

**TFm** - Treinamento Físico Moderado

**TIAI** - Treinamento Intervalado de Alta Intensidade

**VIGITEL** - Vigilância de Fatores de Risco e Proteção para Doenças Crônicas por Inquérito Telefônico

## SUMÁRIO

<b>1. VISÃO INTEGRADORA DO PROBLEMA</b> .....	11
<b>1.1. Etanol ou álcool etílico (EtOH)</b> .....	11
1.1.1. Metabolismo do álcool .....	13
<b>1.2. Padrão de consumo – <i>binge drinking</i></b> .....	14
<b>1.3. <i>Binge drinking</i> e adultos</b> .....	15
<b>1.4. Álcool e medula espinal</b> .....	16
<b>1.5. Treinamento físico e o sistema nervoso central</b> .....	17
<b>1.6. Álcool e treinamento físico</b> .....	18
<b>1.7. Objetivos</b> .....	20
1.7.1. Objetivo geral.....	20
1.7.2. Objetivos específicos .....	20
<b>2. ARTIGO: EFEITOS DO EXERCÍCIO FÍSICO AERÓBICO DE INTENSIDADE MODERADA SOBRE PARÂMETROS BIOQUÍMICOS E MORFOLÓGICOS DA MEDULA ESPINAL DE RATOS EXPOSTOS AO ETANOL NO MODELO <i>BINGE DRINKING</i></b> .....	21
<b>3. CONCLUSÕES INTEGRADORAS</b> .....	35
<b>4. REFERÊNCIAS</b> .....	36

## 1. VISÃO INTEGRADORA DO PROBLEMA

O uso de álcool etílico ou etanol (EtOH) está entre os transtornos mentais mais prevalentes em todo o mundo, além de ser um elemento importante para a avaliação dos riscos e prejuízos associados ao seu uso (CISA, 2020). É uma droga psicotrópica que contém propriedades tóxicas que causam dependência, aceita em grande parte do mundo, retratando um problema pertinente de saúde pública (OMS, 2018).

O beber pesado episódico (BPE), também conhecido como consumo abusivo ou *binge drinking* (em inglês) (BD), é um padrão de consumo comum entre adultos jovens e considerado consumo de fim de semana, podendo gerar dependência e causar diversos danos ao organismo (CISA, 2020).

O BPE consiste no consumo de 60 g ou mais de álcool puro (cerca de 4 doses ou mais), em pelo menos uma ocasião no último mês (CISA, 2020). Em 5 de fevereiro de 2004, o *National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism USA* (NIAAA) aprovou e caracterizou uma diferenciação entre mulheres (ingestão de 4 ou mais doses) e homens (consumo de 5 ou mais doses) (NIAAA, 2004).

De acordo com pesquisa realizada pela Inteligência em Pesquisa e Consultoria (IPEC) a pedido do Centro de Informações Sobre Saúde e Álcool (CISA), o consumo abusivo de álcool é um padrão nocivo. No Brasil, 18,3% da população relatou uso abusivo em 2021 (CISA, 2022). O estudo ainda aponta que, diferente do que a maioria dos entrevistados acredita, ele está associado a danos de curto e longo prazo à saúde (CISA, 2022). Quanto mais frequente, maior o impacto negativo do álcool em diversos órgãos e sistemas, especialmente no trato gastrointestinal, fígado, pâncreas, sistema nervoso e sistema cardiovascular (CISA, 2020).

O uso indiscriminado dessa substância psicoativa, por sua comercialização legal intensificada através dos meios de comunicação e marketing, traz consequências sociais, econômicas e de saúde, tornando urgente a implementação de políticas públicas a fim de minimizar ou prevenir tais consequências (OMS, 2018).

### 1.1. Etanol ou álcool etílico (EtOH)

O etanol (EtOH) ou álcool etílico é uma substância química orgânica pertencente à família dos álcoois, lícita, produzida desde a antiguidade, de fácil

acesso, presente no cotidiano das pessoas e amplamente disponível como bebida (Garcia *et al.*, 2015; Martins, 2013). O EtOH é depressor do sistema nervoso central (SNC), prejudicando os processos corticais mesmo em pequenas doses (CISA, 2004; Garriott, 1988; Mcrae; Brady; Sonne, 2001).

De acordo com a Organização Mundial da Saúde (OMS), o etanol é a droga mais consumida no mundo, sendo responsável por seis mortes por minuto (OMS, 2018). Para muitos, as bebidas alcoólicas são parte rotineira da paisagem social. Isso é particularmente verdadeiro para ambientes sociais com grande visibilidade e influência social, seja em âmbito nacional ou internacional, onde o álcool frequentemente acompanha a socialização (OMS, 2014).

O abuso de EtOH pode resultar em distúrbios cognitivos, episódios depressivos, ansiedade severa, insônia, além de distúrbios hepáticos e renais (Breese; Overstreet; Knapp, 2005; Molina; Nelson, 2018; Schuckit, 2009). Estes efeitos prejudiciais são diretamente proporcionais ao tipo e duração do consumo de EtOH (Clarren; Bowden, 1982; Harrison *et al.*, 2017).

O I Levantamento Nacional sobre os Padrões de Consumo de Álcool na População Brasileira, realizado com o intuito de determinar os padrões de consumo de álcool pelos brasileiros, mostrou que o padrão *binge* (definido como o consumo de 4 ou 5 doses de álcool, respectivamente, entre mulheres e homens) é mais prevalente entre os homens (21%) em comparação às mulheres (12%) (Laranjeira *et al.*, 2007).

Laranjeira *et al.* (2007) também evidenciou que 28% da população brasileira, equivalente a 33,6 milhões de pessoas, já bebeu em *binge* pelo menos uma vez no último ano, com prevalência maior entre os homens (40% homens e 18% mulheres). Contudo, o uso em *binge* diminui com o avançar da idade.

No Brasil, desde 2006, a Vigilância de Fatores de Risco e Proteção para Doenças Crônicas por Inquérito Telefônico (VIGITEL), realizada nas capitais dos estados e no Distrito Federal, monitora anualmente a prevalência do consumo abusivo de álcool, definido como o consumo de cinco ou mais doses de bebida alcoólica (homem) ou quatro ou mais doses (mulher) em uma única ocasião, pelo menos uma vez nos últimos 30 dias (Brasil, 2006).

### 1.1.1 Metabolismo do álcool

O consumo excessivo de álcool resulta em diversas consequências adversas à saúde, incluindo transtorno do uso de álcool, danos ao fígado e vários tipos de câncer (CISA, 2022; Courtney; Polich, 2009).

As diferenças no metabolismo do álcool adicionadas a fatores como o tamanho do fígado e massa corporal fazem com que algumas pessoas tendem a possuir maior risco de desenvolver problemas inerentes do álcool em relação a outras (CISA, 2015). A maior quantidade de álcool ingerido é metabolizada no fígado, sendo este o principal sítio de metabolização desta substância psicoativa no organismo (CISA, 2005; 2015).

O metabolismo do EtOH possui três vias oxidativas: uma via principal e duas vias alternativas (Baraona; Lieber, 1979). São três vias metabólicas: álcool desidrogenase (ADH); sistema microsomal de oxidação do etanol (MEOS) e catalase (Zima *et al.*, 2001).

A álcool desidrogenase (ADH), principal enzima de metabolização do EtOH, catalisa a conversão do etanol em acetaldeído, substância tóxica para o organismo (Hawkins; Kalant, 1972). Após a primeira fase em que a ADH converte o etanol em acetaldeído, acontece a segunda fase, na qual a enzima aldeído desidrogenase (ALDH) converte o aldeído em ácido acético (acetato).

O acetaldeído e o acetato, produzidos a partir deste metabolismo oxidativo do álcool, contribuem para o dano celular e tecidual (Zakhari, 2006). A segunda via metabólica de reação oxidativa é o Sistema Mitocondrial de Oxidação do Etanol (MEOS), que também converte o EtOH em acetaldeído sob a atuação da enzima citocromo P450 (CYP2E1), resultando no consumo de NADPH e O<sub>2</sub> simultaneamente à produção de radicais livres devido ao grande uso de NADPH no organismo (Lieber; Decarli, 1991).

A terceira via, denominada catalase, oxida o etanol a acetaldeído quando o peróxido de hidrogênio está disponível e a produção de hidrogênio no fígado é bastante baixa (Boveris; Oshino; Chance, 1972; Crabb; Bosron; Li, 1987). Sob condições fisiológicas, esta enzima não tem papel significativo no metabolismo humano (Boveris; Oshino; Chance, 1972).

O acetaldeído é uma substância tóxica cujo acúmulo acarreta uma reação altamente aversiva que inclui rubor facial, náusea e taquicardia. Essa reação é

semelhante à experimentada por alcoólatras que consomem álcool após tomarem o dissulfiram (Antabuse®), medicamento que desestimula o consumo de álcool (Edenberg, 2007).

Além disso, pesquisadores acreditam que o acetaldeído pode ser responsável por determinados efeitos comportamentais e fisiológicos atribuídos ao álcool (Deitrich; Zimatkin; Pronko, 2006). Estudos laboratoriais demonstram que o composto, quando administrado em animais, provoca incoordenação, comprometimento da memória e sonolência, efeitos frequentemente associados ao álcool (Quertemont; Didone, 2006).

Por fim, destaca-se ainda como consequências prejudiciais decorrentes das vias do metabolismo do EtOH a hipóxia (baixa concentração de oxigênio) no fígado e a formação de espécies reativas de oxigênio (EROs), o que pode causar danos a outros componentes celulares (Zakhari, 2006).

## **1.2. Padrão de consumo - *binge drinking***

O beber episódico pesado ou *binge drinking* (BD) é o padrão de consumo de álcool que mais cresce no mundo, sendo responsável por promover situações de exposição do indivíduo a diversos prejuízos induzidos pelo álcool (CISA, 2020; Kuntsche; Rehm; Gmel, 2004).

*Binge drinking* está associado a problemas sociais e de saúde severos, incluindo doenças sexualmente transmissíveis, gravidez indesejada, síndrome da morte súbita infantil, infarto agudo do miocárdio e acidentes automobilísticos (Brewer; Swahn, 2005; Iyasu *et al.*, 2002; Naimi *et al.*, 2003).

Na década de 1990, Wechsler *et al.* (1992) introduziram o termo “*binge drinking*” para descrever um padrão de consumo de determinada quantidade de álcool em uma única ocasião. De acordo com a definição contemporânea, o *binge drinking* é mensurado através de um questionário sobre a frequência de consumo que excede determinada quantidade em determinado momento, por exemplo, “Com que frequência nos últimos 12 meses (ou 30 dias) você bebeu X bebidas ou mais em uma única ocasião?” (Kuntsche *et al.*, 2017).

O padrão de consumo intenso e episódico de EtOH caracteriza por consumo excessivo de álcool a concentração alcoólica sanguínea (BAC - *blood alcohol concentration*) igual ou acima de 0,08g por decilitro de sangue. Tal fato geralmente

ocorre após o consumo de 4 drinques por uma mulher ou 5 drinques por um homem em um período de duas horas, ocasionando alterações biopsicossociais (brigas, ferimentos, acidentes, problemas com a polícia, etc.), consequências negativas à saúde e problemas sociais, econômicos ou legais (Laranjeira *et al.*, 2007; NIAAA, 2004).

O *binge drinking* é um dos muitos fatores de risco comportamentais que podem atuar em combinação com outros fatores individuais, situacionais e socioculturais para facilitar o envolvimento em comportamento violento. No entanto, o *binge drinking* é evitável (Brewer; Swahn, 2005).

Segundo a OMS, foi estabelecido como critério que o bebedor *binge drinking* é o indivíduo que consome um volume alcoólico excessivo em um curto espaço de tempo, sendo caracterizado por episódios repetidos de consumo excessivo de álcool levando à exposição seguida pela abstinência (OMS, 2014).

Em 2004, o NIAAA estabeleceu que pessoas com fatores de risco para o desenvolvimento de alcoolismo têm risco aumentado com qualquer nível de consumo de álcool, mesmo abaixo de um nível “arriscado”, o que gera impacto direto na saúde pública, de forma física ou mental (NIAAA, 2004).

A exposição diária simula um consumo crônico de EtOH. Contudo, esse consumo crônico não é mais o consumo de maior prevalência no mundo. O tipo de ingestão que mais cresce é o intermitente - *binge drinking*, em que as pessoas bebem grandes quantidades de EtOH num pequeno intervalo de dias, justificando o porquê deste modelo de exposição, conferindo-lhe alta aplicabilidade ao que acontece em humanos (Fagundes *et al.*, 2016; Fernandes *et al.*, 2018; Frazão *et al.*, 2020; Lamarão-Vieira *et al.*, 2019; Pamplona-Santos *et al.*, 2019).

### **1.3. *Binge drinking* e adultos**

O *binge drinking* é um tópico cada vez mais importante na pesquisa sobre álcool (Courtney; Polich, 2009). Ocorre com frequência entre os adultos, trazendo riscos à saúde e à sua segurança. Os pontos preditores de comportamentos de *binge* na idade adulta jovem são semelhantes aos pontos relatados pela literatura: jovens impulsivos inclinados à busca de novidades que tendem a continuar bebendo na vida adulta (Wellman *et al.*, 2014).

Aqueles que continuam a beber, no entanto, estão expostos não apenas aos



riscos imediatos do *binge drinking* para a saúde, mas também às consequências de longo prazo, incluindo o potencial de abuso e dependência de álcool na idade adulta jovem e na meia-idade (Guo *et al.*, 2000; Jennison, 2004; Sloan; Grossman; Platt, 2011; Wellman *et al.*, 2014).

Jefferis e colaboradores (2005) apontaram que o período e a idade estão associados ao comportamento de beber, tanto em termos de mudança na aceitabilidade social quanto na disponibilidade de álcool.

Novas estratégias devem ser pensadas, inclusive de caráter individual, mudanças nas atitudes ou comportamentos de uma pessoa relacionados ao consumo de álcool, como diminuir a ingestão da bebida (por exemplo, frequência, quantidade ou concentração de álcool no sangue) e/ou comportamentos de risco relacionados ao álcool, reduzindo assim as consequências prejudiciais. As políticas que abordam o consumo *binge drinking* precisam ser direcionadas a adultos na meia-idade, bem como a adolescentes e adultos mais jovens (Jefferis; Power, Manor, 2005).

#### **1.4. Álcool e medula espinal**

Estudo recente relata que uma em cada três lesões traumáticas da medula espinal (ME) ocorre durante ou logo após o consumo de álcool, sendo que a intoxicação alcoólica aguda no momento da lesão pode contribuir para as consequências neuropatológicas da lesão medular (Glaser *et al.*, 2023).

A literatura demonstra que o EtOH causou apoptose e neurodegeneração nos neurônios do corno dorsal de camundongos nos primeiros dias pós-natais, o que foi acompanhado por ativação glial, infiltração de macrófagos e aumento da expressão de receptor do CCL2/MCP-1 (CCR2), um receptor para proteína quimioatraente de monócitos 1 (MCP-1). A morte neuronal induzida por EtOH durante o desenvolvimento resultou em perda permanente de neurônios da medula espinal em camundongos adultos (Ren *et al.*, 2017). O EtOH pode causar a morte de neurônios motores por mecanismos apoptóticos ou necróticos e, de fato, demonstrou induzir apoptose em neurônios hipotalâmicos e timócitos (Deet *et al.*, 1994; Ewald; Shao, 1993).

De acordo com Ren *et al.* (2017), a exposição ao etanol no desenvolvimento causou perda permanente de neurônios da medula espinal e a sinalização do CCR2

desempenhou um papel importante na neurotoxicidade do EtOH.

Nesse contexto, o exercício físico representa uma alternativa indispensável na promoção do bem-estar generalizado e impacta diretamente a qualidade de vida, além de fornecer um mecanismo para regular a variação e o equilíbrio entre pró-oxidantes e antioxidantes. A prática regular de exercícios reduz o risco de doenças metabólicas e cardiorrespiratórias crônicas, em parte porque exerce efeitos anti-inflamatórios no organismo (Gleeson *et al.*, 2011).

Estudo prévio aponta que o aumento dos mecanismos celulares e sinápticos da plasticidade promovidos pelo exercício pode contribuir para os efeitos benéficos do enriquecimento motor, reduzir a degeneração e promover a recuperação da função em encéfalos lesados. No caso de regiões encefálicas com lesão, a prática de exercícios físicos pode alterar sinapses ou reduzir eventos moleculares na área perilesionada ou nas áreas do córtex. Outro mecanismo envolvido na relação entre exercício e SNC é a ação dos fatores neurotróficos relacionados à melhor função cognitiva, neurogênese, angiogênese e plasticidade cerebral (De Alencar Rocha *et al.*, 2014).

Diante do exposto, este estudo de certo ineditismo e originalidade teve como objetivo investigar os efeitos prejudiciais da ingestão compulsiva de EtOH na medula espinal de ratos machos e os potenciais efeitos neuroprotetores fornecidos pelo treinamento físico aeróbico de intensidade moderada.

### **1.5. Treinamento físico e o sistema nervoso central**

O treinamento físico (TF) tem sido combinado com tratamentos farmacológicos para acentuar efeitos neurais e melhores resultados funcionais, no que tange à reabilitação de pacientes acometidos por Acidente Vascular Cerebral (AVC), por exemplo (Pin-Barre; Laurin, 2015).

Conforme Perrey (2013), o exercício representa uma intervenção comportamental que melhora a saúde cerebral e a função motora, pois a prática regular pode ser utilizada como um recurso preventivo e terapêutico para saúde (Lamarão-Vieira *et al.*, 2019; Perrey, 2013).

Arida *et al.* (2007) demonstraram que o exercício físico interferiu no processo de epileptogênese, indicando efeito positivo do exercício no cérebro. Em seguida, Dishman *et al.* (2006) apontaram que o TF pode influenciar favoravelmente a

plasticidade cerebral, facilitando os processos neurogenerativos, neuroadaptativos e neuroprotetores, seja na prevenção e tratamento da obesidade, câncer, depressão, declínio da cognição associado ao envelhecimento e distúrbios neurológicos crônicos e agudos, como doença de Parkinson, Alzheimer, AVC do tipo isquêmico e lesões na medula espinal.

O córtex motor e a medula espinal possuem a capacidade de alterar a estrutura e a função em resposta ao treinamento motor (neuroplasticidade). Além disso, são capazes de restaurar a função motora em pessoas que ficaram paralisadas por muito tempo devido a danos na medula espinal ou derrame cerebral (Imai; Nakajima, 2009).

## 1.6. Álcool e treinamento físico

O treinamento intervalado de alta intensidade (TIAI) é uma abordagem eficaz para melhorar o condicionamento físico. No entanto, o consumo de cerveja, prática regular em indivíduos fisicamente ativos, pode interferir nesses efeitos (Molina-Hidalgo *et al.*, 2020).

Conforme Molina e Nelson (2018), a identificação de processos fisiopatológicos subjacentes responsáveis pela lesão de tecidos e órgãos pode levar ao desenvolvimento de intervenções preventivas ou habilidades terapêuticas para reduzir a carga de saúde associada ao *binge drinking*.

Estratégias para reduzir os impactos prejudiciais do consumo *binge drinking* vem sendo investigadas, incluindo o treinamento físico aeróbico moderado (TFm), que está associado com a modulação da neurogênese e estratégia não farmacológica para a possível neuroproteção da medula espinal contra o dano oxidativo induzido pela ingestão de EtOH do tipo intermitente *binge drinking*.

A medula espinal é um órgão que recebe informações motoras do cérebro e informações sensoriais do corpo. Em adição a outros estudos do nosso grupo de pesquisa, avaliamos se a medula espinal pode ser sensível ao dano oxidativo e neuronal induzido pelo consumo intenso e episódico de EtOH semelhante às situações de entretenimento associado ao treinamento físico aeróbico de intensidade moderada (Fagundes *et al.*, 2016; Fernandes *et al.*, 2018; Ferreira *et al.*, 2021; Frazão *et al.*, 2020; Lamarão-Vieira *et al.*, 2019; Pamplona-Santos *et al.*, 2019).

Portanto, pelo presente exposto, é justificável avaliar os efeitos do exercício

físico sobre a exposição alcoólica em modelo *binge drinking* sobre os parâmetros morfológicos e bioquímicos, pois não há na literatura estudo que relacione medula espinal ao padrão de consumo *binge drinking*.

## 1.7. Objetivos

### 1.7.1. Objetivo geral

Investigar se a exposição intensa e episódica ao etanol (modelo *binge drinking*) é capaz de induzir a danos oxidativos na medula espinal. Adicionalmente, avaliar se o treinamento físico aeróbico de intensidade moderada é capaz de inibir ou minimizar o possível dano induzido pela exposição intensa e episódica ao EtOH (modelo *binge drinking*).

### 1.7.2. Objetivos específicos

- Verificar se o treinamento físico de intensidade moderada inibe/atenua possíveis alterações na bioquímica oxidativa na medula espinal, oriunda da exposição intensa e episódica ao EtOH (modelo *binge drinking*);
- Analisar possíveis alterações histológicas, incluindo contagem de corpos celulares de neurônios motores, ocasionadas pela exposição intensa e episódica ao EtOH (modelo *binge drinking*).

## 2. ARTIGO: EFEITOS DO EXERCÍCIO FÍSICO AERÓBICO DE INTENSIDADE MODERADA SOBRE PARÂMETROS BIOQUÍMICOS E MORFOLÓGICOS DA MEDULA ESPINAL DE RATOS EXPOSTOS AO ETANOL NO MODELO *BINGE DRINKING*



Article

### Aerobic Physical Training Attenuates Oxidative Stress in the Spinal Cord of Adult Rats Induced by Binge-like Ethanol Intake

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**Abstract:** Binge drinking is the most frequent consumption pattern among young adults and remarkably changes the central nervous system; thus, research on strategies to protect it is relevant. This study aimed to investigate the detrimental effects of binge-like EtOH intake on the spinal cord of male rats and the potential neuroprotective effects provided by moderate-intensity aerobic physical training. Male Wistar rats were distributed into the 'control group', 'training group', 'EtOH group', and 'training + EtOH'. The physical training protocol consisted of daily 30-min exercise on a treadmill for 5 consecutive days followed by 2 days off during 4 weeks. After the fifth day of each week, distilled water ('control group' and 'training group') or 3 g/kg of EtOH diluted at 20% w/v ('EtOH group' and 'training + EtOH group') was administered for 3 consecutive days through intragastric gavage to simulate compulsive consumption. Spinal cord samples were collected for oxidative biochemistry and morphometric analyses. The binge-like EtOH intake induced oxidative and tissue damage by decreasing reduced glutathione (GSH) levels, increasing lipid peroxidation (LPO), and reducing motor neurons (MN) density in the cervical segment. Even under EtOH exposure, physical training maintained GSH levels, reduced LPO, and prevented MN reduction at the cervical segment. Physical training is a non-pharmacological strategy to neuroprotect the spinal cord against oxidative damage induced by binge-like EtOH intake.

**Keywords:** ethanol; binge drinking; moderate physical activity; redox system; spinal cord



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#### 1. Introduction

Easy access to and abuse of ethanol (EtOH) have been associated with health and social harm in several countries; thus, this psychotropic drug figures as a global public health concern [1–3]. The excessive consumption of alcoholic beverages in 2010 cost the United States approximately \$249 billion, of which 77% was related to binge drinking [4]. The EtOH abuse can result in cognitive disturbances, depressive episodes, severe anxiety, insomnia, liver and kidney disorders [5–7]. Interestingly, these detrimental effects are directly proportional to the type and duration of EtOH consumption [8–10]. In addition, excessive EtOH consumption has been related to dopamine neurotoxic effects through



the increase of  $\alpha$ -synuclein in rats and accumulation of A $\beta$  and Tau phosphorylation in humans [11].

Heavy episodic drinking (binge), in which the EtOH concentration reaches at least 0.08 g per deciliter of blood, has grown significantly among adolescents and young adults [12–20]. In animal studies, binge-like EtOH consumption has been associated with tissue changes and oxidative stress in salivary glands [21,22], hippocampus, and prefrontal cortex, damage of motor and cognitive functions [23–25], and decrease of alveolar bone quality [26,27]. One of the main harmful effects of EtOH is the increase of reactive oxygen species (ROS) and decrease of antioxidants such as the glutathione peroxidase (GPx) enzyme [28,29].

Among the strategies to reduce these detrimental effects, physical training has been associated with neuroinflammation reduction, improvement of cognitive functions, an increase of brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF) levels, modulation of neurogenesis, and cerebral oxidative stress [30–35].

Muscle contraction releases myokines in the bloodstream such as peroxisome proliferator-activated receptor coactivator 1-alpha (PGC-1 $\alpha$ ) and the nuclear factor erythroid 2-related factor 2 (Nrf2) that acts as a transcription factor for antioxidant enzymes in different tissues [36]. Chronic physical training seems to increase the expression of the important antioxidant markers superoxide dismutase 1 (SOD1), reduced glutathione (GSH), and GPx [37].

Our research group has shown that training on a treadmill attenuated the EtOH-induced detrimental effects in terms of tissue and functional changes in the cerebellum as well as hippocampal functional changes [19,38]. In comparison to anaerobic training, aerobic training substantially improves the performance of executive control processes [39].

The relation between the neuroplasticity benefits of physical training and the detrimental effects of EtOH consumption is not completely elucidated. The mechanisms by which physical training can improve the reflexes associated with the spinal cord of alcoholics are not established. This study aimed to investigate the detrimental effects of binge-like EtOH intake on the spinal cord of male rats and the potential neuroprotective effects provided by moderate-intensity aerobic physical training.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1. Ethical Aspects and Experimental Animals

This study was approved by the Ethics Committee on Animal Experimentation of the UFPA (license number 1423181219) and followed both ARRIVE 2.0 guideline and NIH Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals [40]. Sixty male Wistar rats (90 days old; weighing between 172 to 199 g) were maintained in collective cages (4 animals each) with water and food ad libitum. The cages were housed in a climate-controlled room (~25 °C) with a 12 h light/dark cycle (lights on 7 a.m.).

### 2.2. Exposure Protocol and Experimental Groups

Only male rats were selected to allow direct comparisons with our previous findings [19,38] and to avoid bias related to gender variability in physical training performance and alcohol metabolism [41].

The animals were randomly distributed into 4 groups ( $n = 15$ ): 'control group' (sedentary animals treated with distilled water), 'training group' (animals submitted to physical training and treated with distilled water), 'EtOH group' (sedentary animals treated with EtOH), and 'training + EtOH group' (animals submitted to physical training and treated with EtOH) (Figure 1).

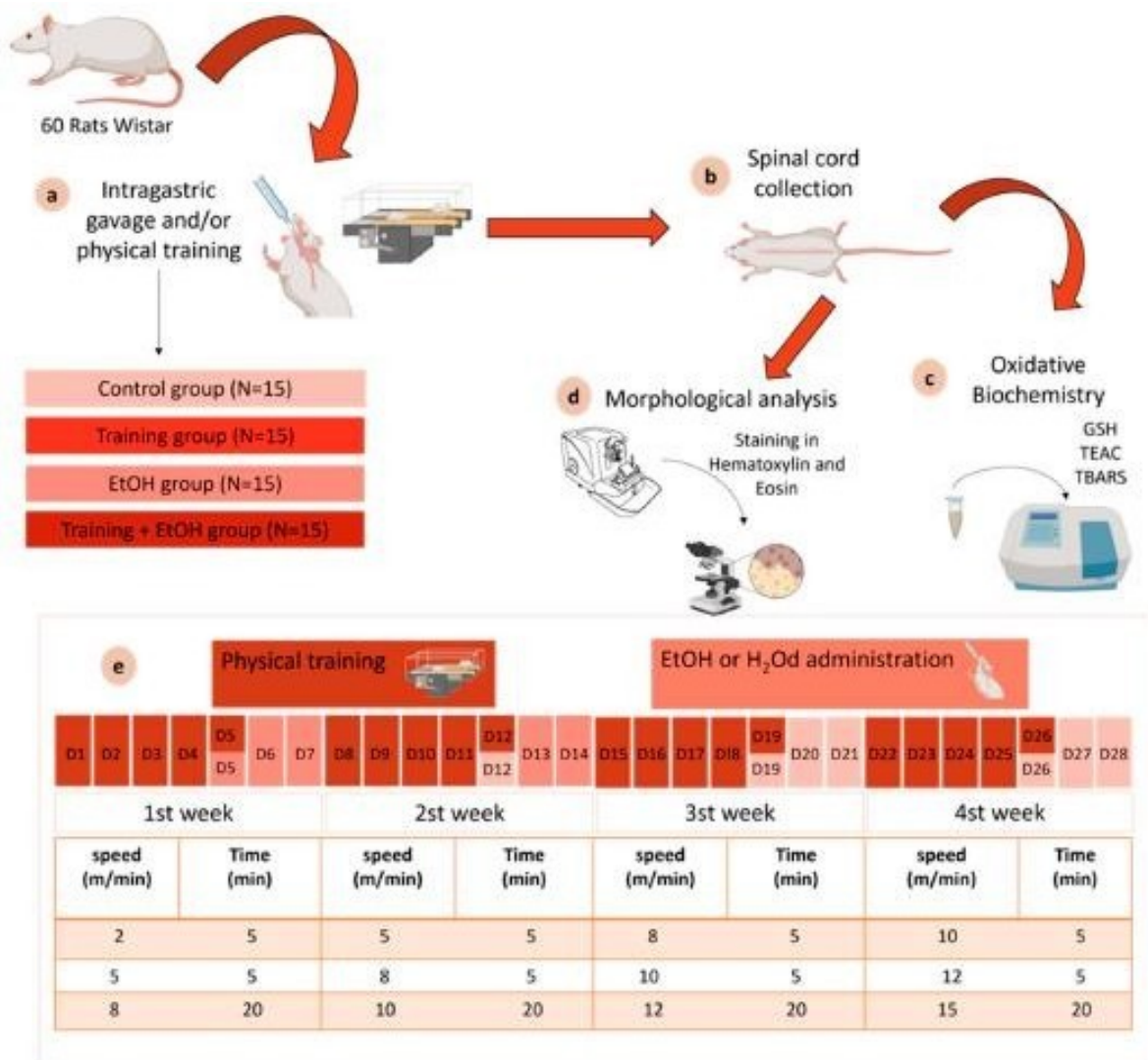


Figure 1. Study design. (a) experimental groups; (b) collection of biological material (spinal cord sectioned into regions: cervical, thoracic, and lumbar); (c) Oxidative biochemistry analysis (GSH, TEAC, and TBARS); (d) Morphological analysis by counting motoneurons in Hematoxylin and Eosin (HE); (e) Details of exposure to EtOH or physical training during the experimental period.

### 2.2.1. Physical Training Protocol

The group allocation was adapted from Arida et al. 2007 [42], in which the animals were subjected to training on a treadmill for 3 days (10 min/day at a speed of 8 m/min and 0° of inclination) and the performance of each animal was classified as 1 = refused to run; 2 = below average runner (stops and runs in the wrong direction); 3 = average runner; 4 = above average runner; 5 = good runner (consistently stayed at the front of the treadmill). The animals classified as good runners were selected for the 'training group' and 'training + EtOH group'.

The physical training protocol was adapted by Lamarão et al. 2019 [19] and Pamplona et al. 2019 [38], in which the animals were daily subjected to 30-min training on the treadmill with progressive speed increase for 5 consecutive days followed by 2 days off during 4 weeks [19,38] (Figure 1). All animals successfully performed the training protocol without accidental injuries, infarction, fatigue, and lack of willingness to exercise [42].



### 2.2.2. Drinking Protocol

After the fifth day of each week, distilled water ('control group' and 'training group') or 3 g/kg of EtOH diluted at 20% *w/v* ('EtOH group' and 'training + EtOH group') was administered for 3 consecutive days through intragastric gavage. The animals were weekly weighted to adjust the dose. The binge-like EtOH administrations aimed to simulate a pattern of compulsive consumption for 4 weeks [22,24,43].

### 2.3. Euthanasia and Spinal Cord Collection

The animals were anesthetized through the injection of ketamine hydrochloride (90 mg/kg) and xylazine hydrochloride (9 mg/kg). After the absence of corneal reflex, the spinal cord samples of 6 animals per group were collected, cleaned, and stored at  $-80\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$  for oxidative biochemistry analyses.

For the morphological analysis, the spinal cord was removed after transcardial perfusion with 0.9% heparinized saline solution followed by 4% paraformaldehyde [44] and then divided into cervical, thoracic, and lumbar segments.

### 2.4. Oxidative Biochemistry Analyses

Tissues were thawed and ultrasonically homogenized in Tris-HCl buffer (20 mM, pH 7.4) at  $4\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$  and 1:10 ratio. The tissue preparation was detailed in our previous study [45].

#### 2.4.1. Protein Concentration Assay

The determination of total protein levels followed the method proposed by Bradford (1976) [46], in which the proteins bind to the Coomassie brilliant blue dye and form a blue compound with maximum absorbance at 595 nm.

#### 2.4.2. Measurement of Trolox Equivalent Antioxidant Capacity (TEAC)

TEAC levels were determined through the colorimetric method described by Miller et al. (1993) [47] e modified by Re et al. (1999) [48]. Briefly, the reaction between 2,2-azinobis [3-ethylbenzothiazoline-6-sulfonic acid] diammonium salt (ABTS) and potassium persulfate ( $\text{K}_2\text{S}_2\text{O}_8$ ) produces the blue/green  $\text{ABTS}^{\bullet+}$  chromophore. The antioxidants present in the sample to this preformed radical cation reduce it to ABTS on a time scale depending on the antioxidant capacity, concentration of antioxidants, and duration of the reaction. The reaction was spectrophotometrically measured throughout 5 min by observing the absorbance change at 734 nm. Total antioxidant capacity was expressed in  $\mu\text{mol/g}$  of protein.

#### 2.4.3. Measurement of Reduced Glutathione (GSH)

The ability of GSH to reduce 5,5-dithiobis-2-nitrobenzoic acid (DTNB) to nitrobenzoic acid (TNB) was quantified by spectrophotometry at 412 nm. This method was adapted from Ellman (1959) [49] and the GSH concentration was expressed as  $\mu\text{g/g}$  of protein.

#### 2.4.4. Determination of Thiobarbituric Acid Reactive Substances (TBARS)

Lipid peroxidation (LPO) was estimated through the formation of the malondialdehyde with thiobarbituric acid (MDA-TBA) complex with pH 2.5 at  $94\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$  [50]. The samples were read at 535 nm and the results were expressed in  $\text{nM/g}$  of protein.

### 2.5. Morphometric Analysis

The spinal cord samples were post-fixed in Bouin's solution for 12 h, dehydrated in increasing alcohol solution, clarified in xylene, and embedded in paraplast (McCormick Scientific; Saint Louis, MO, USA). Subsequently, 7- $\mu\text{m}$ -thick cross-sections of the cervical, thoracic, and lumbar segments were obtained, mounted on microscopy slides, stained with hematoxylin and eosin (HE), and coverslipped with mounting medium (Entellan; Merck, Darmstadt, Germany). The samples were observed under a brightfield optical microscope

(Nikon Eclipse Ci H550; Nikon, Tokyo, Japan) equipped with a digital camera (DS-Fi3; Nikon, Tokyo, Japan) to determine the motor neurons (MN) density.

MN quantification followed the protocol proposed by Ferucci et al. (2018) [51], who described these cells located in the ventral horn of the spinal cord with basophilic characteristics and with poorly condensed chromatin nuclei. MN counting was performed at different fields of the ventral horns of the cervical, thoracic, and lumbar segments with the aid of the NIH ImageJ software version 1.52 (<http://rsb.info.nih.gov/ij/> (accessed on 15 February 2023)).

### 2.6. Statistical Analyses

The normal distribution of the data was verified by the Shapiro-Wilk test (GraphPad Prism 8.0.2; GraphPad Software Inc., San Diego, CA, USA). The body weight curve was evaluated by using two-way ANOVA followed by the Tukey post hoc test. Oxidative biochemistry and MN density were analyzed by using one-way ANOVA, partial eta-squared ( $\eta^2$ ) analysis, and the Tukey post hoc test. The results were expressed in mean  $\pm$  standard error of the mean (SEM), values of  $p \leq 0.05$  were considered significant, and the partial  $\eta^2$  analysis was considered: minimal to no effects ( $\eta^2$  between 0.00 and 0.29), small effects ( $\eta^2$  between 0.30 and 0.50), moderate effects ( $\eta^2$  between 0.50 and 0.70), and large ( $\eta^2$  between 0.71 and 1.00) [52].

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Body Weight Gain Was Not Influenced by Binge-like EtOH Intake and Physical Training

In all groups, a significant body weight gain was observed from baseline up to 4 weeks (Control group:  $177.65 \pm 0.99$  vs.  $192.97 \pm 1.46$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ; training group:  $178.85 \pm 1.89$  vs.  $194.22 \pm 1.56$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ; EtOH group:  $179.50 \pm 1.33$  vs.  $191.83 \pm 2.09$ ;  $p = 0.0003$ ; training + EtOH group:  $178.67 \pm 2.15$  vs.  $193.18 \pm 2.21$ ,  $p = 0.0007$ ).

There was no significant difference in body weight mean among groups after 4 weeks (Control:  $192.97 \pm 1.46$ ; training:  $194.22 \pm 1.56$ ; EtOH:  $191.83 \pm 2.08$ ; training + EtOH:  $193.18 \pm 2.21$ ) (Figure 2). Regular physical training and/or binge-like EtOH intakes did not significantly alter the body weight gain of the animals (Figure 2).

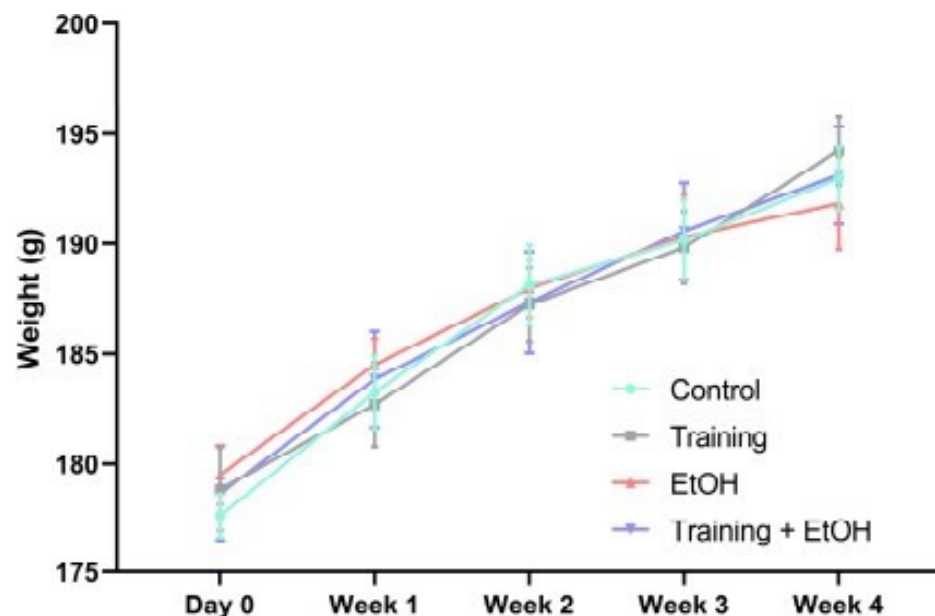


Figure 2. Effect of binge-like EtOH intake and/or training on body weight. There was no significant difference among groups ( $n = 15$ ). Results are expressed as mean  $\pm$  standard error of the mean. Two-way ANOVA and Tukey post hoc test ( $p < 0.05$ ).



### 3.2. Regular Physical Training Attenuated EtOH-Induced Oxidative Stress in the Spinal Cord of Rats

Binge-like EtOH intake caused a significant decrease in GSH levels (EtOH group:  $78.51 \pm 3.18\%$ ) when compared to the 'control group' ( $100.00 \pm 3.38\%$ ;  $p = 0.0243$ ;  $\eta^2 = 0.964$ ), 'training group' ( $108.70 \pm 7.44\%$ ;  $p = 0.0014$ ;  $\eta^2 = 1.368$ ), 'training + EtOH group' ( $104.20 \pm 4.07\%$ ;  $p = 0.0063$ ;  $\eta^2 = 0.761$ ). These data indicate that physical training minimized the changes induced by EtOH (Figure 3a).

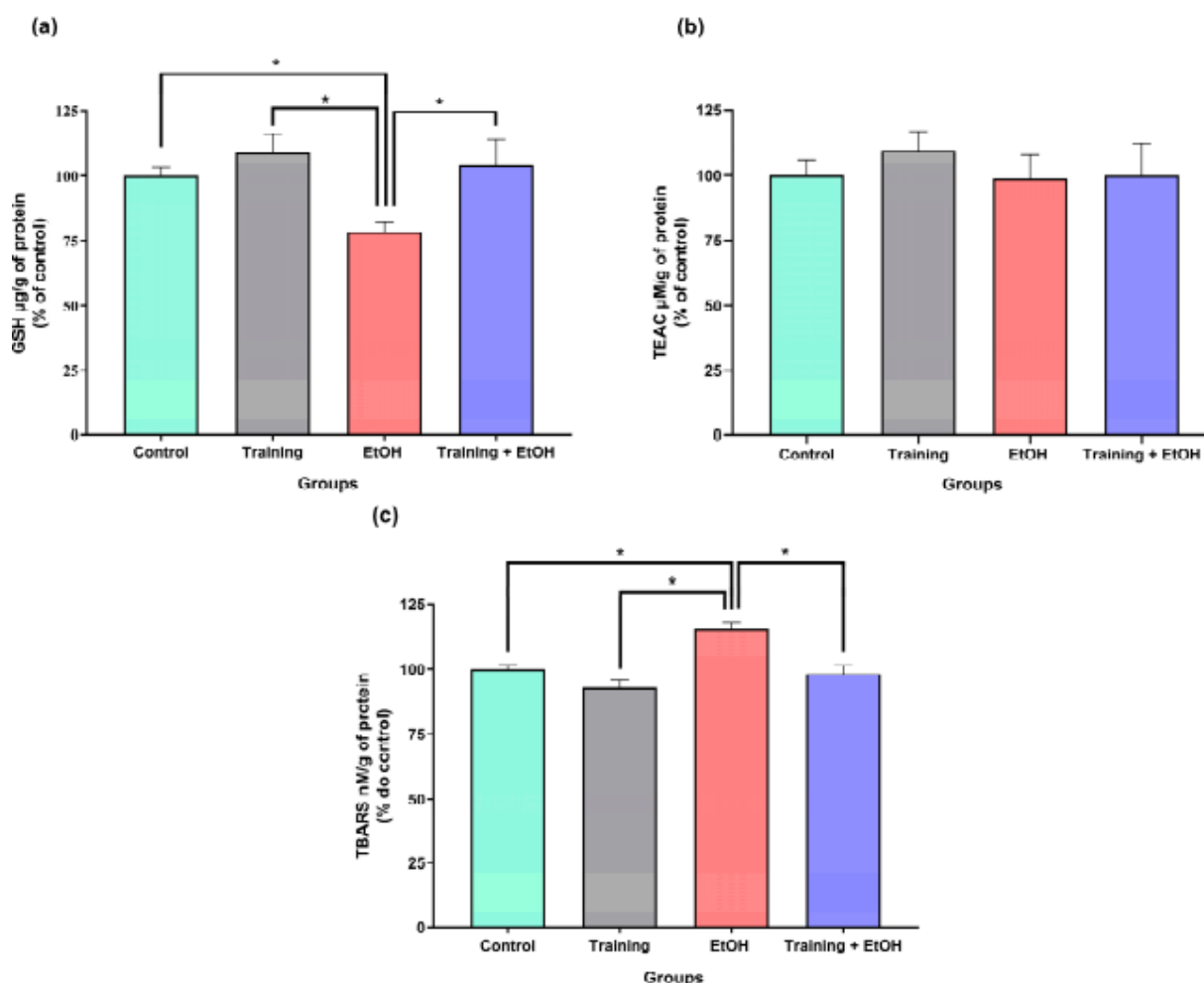


Figure 3. Oxidative biochemistry analyses ( $n = 6$ ). (a) GSH; (b) TEAC; (c) TBARS. Results are expressed as a percentage (%) of control (mean  $\pm$  standard error of the mean). Asterisks (\*) indicate significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ). One-way ANOVA test followed by Tukey post hoc test.

Regardless of physical training and/or binge-like EtOH intake, TEAC levels were not significantly different among groups ('control group':  $100.00 \pm 6.03\%$ ; 'training group':  $109.40 \pm 3.15\%$ ; 'EtOH group':  $98.83 \pm 3.60\%$ ; 'training + EtOH group':  $99.95 \pm 5.38\%$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ; Figure 3b).

Binge-like EtOH intake significantly increased TBARS levels ( $114.9 \pm 2.7\%$ ) when compared to the other groups ('control group':  $99.94 \pm 1.77\%$ ;  $p = 0.0039$ ;  $\eta^2 = 1.580$ ; 'training group':  $92.67 \pm 2.96$ ;  $p = 0.0001$ ;  $\eta^2 = 1.227$ ; 'training + EtOH group':  $98.07 \pm 3.58\%$ ;  $p = 0.0013$ ;  $\eta^2 = 1.113$ ; Figure 3c).

### 3.3. Regular Physical Training Did Not Prevent MN Density Reduction in the Cervical Segment Induced by Repeated Binge-like EtOH Intake

Binge-like EtOH intake significantly reduced the MN density in the cervical segment only when compared to the control group ('control group':  $28 \pm 1.134$ ; 'EtOH group':  $21.11 \pm 1.419$ ;  $p = 0.011$ ;  $\eta^2 = 0.188$ ) (Figure 4). The MN density in the thoracic segment was not significantly different among groups ( $p > 0.05$ ) (Figure 5). In the lumbar segment, the MN density of the 'training group' was significantly different in comparison to 'EtOH group' ('training group'  $31 \pm 2.236$ ; 'EtOH group'  $24.22 \pm 0.702$ ;  $p = 0.061$ ;  $\eta^2 = 0.576$ ); however, this difference was not significant when training was associated with binge-like EtOH intake ('training + EtOH group') (Figure 6).

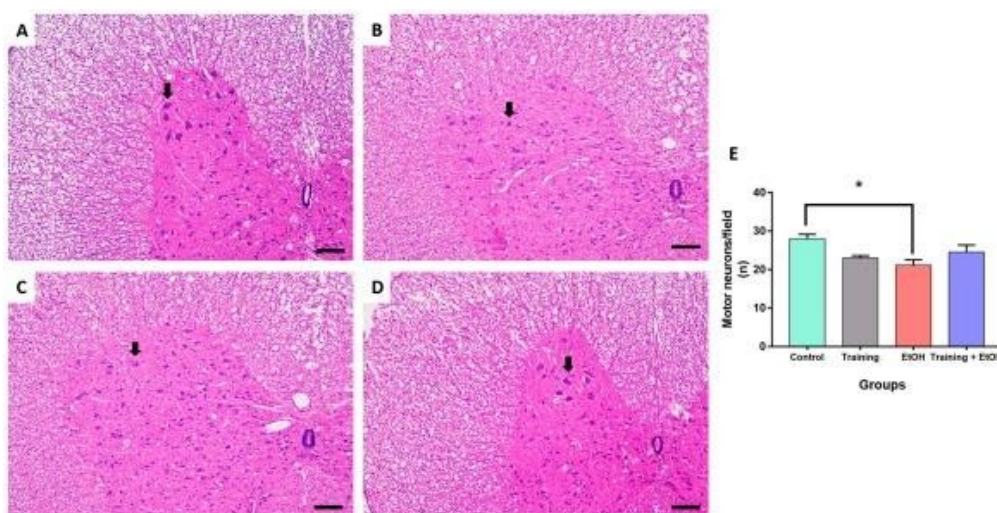


Figure 4. Representative HE-stained photomicrographs of the cervical segment of the spinal cord of rats (100  $\mu\text{m}$  scale bar). (A) control group; (B) training group; (C) EtOH group, and (D) training + EtOH group. (E) Graph of MN density in each group ( $n = 9$ ) expressed as mean  $\pm$  standard error of the mean of the number of cells counted per field. Black arrows indicate motor neurons. Asterisk (\*) indicates a significant difference (One-way ANOVA and Tukey post hoc test,  $p < 0.05$ ).

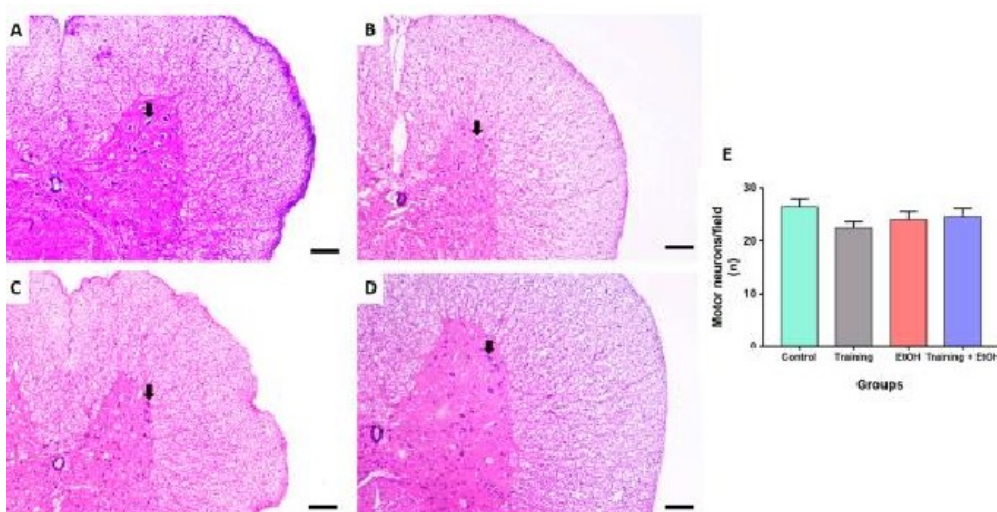
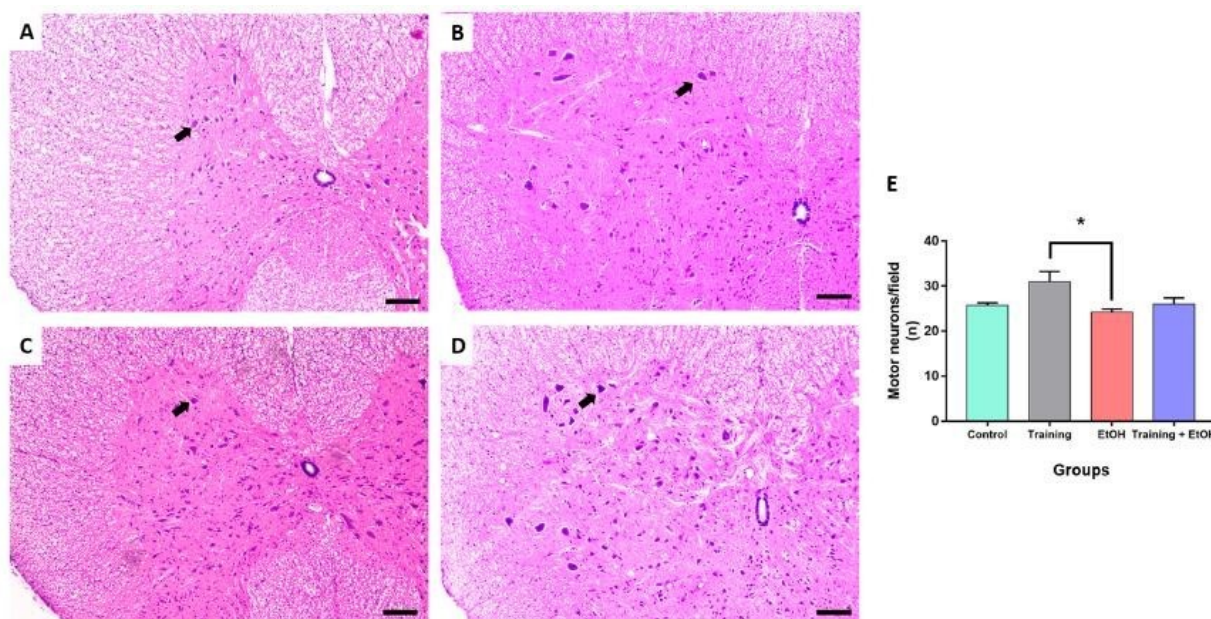


Figure 5. Representative HE-stained photomicrographs of the thoracic segment of the spinal cord of rats (100  $\mu\text{m}$  scale bar). (A) control group; (B) training group; (C) EtOH group, and (D) training + EtOH group. (E) Graph of MN density in each group ( $n = 9$ ) expressed as mean  $\pm$  standard error of the mean of the number of cells counted per field. Black arrows indicate motor neurons.





**Figure 6.** Representative HE-stained photomicrographs of the lumbar segment of the spinal cord of rats (100  $\mu\text{m}$  scale bar). (A) control group; (B) training group; (C) EtOH group, and (D) training + EtOH group. (E) Graph of MN density in each group ( $n = 9$ ) expressed as mean  $\pm$  standard error of the mean of the number of cells counted per field. Black arrows indicate motor neurons. Asterisk (\*) indicates a significant difference (One-way ANOVA and Tukey post hoc test,  $p < 0.05$ ).

#### 4. Discussion

This study evaluated the biochemical and morphological effects in the spinal cord of rats subjected to physical training and/or binge-like EtOH intake for 4 weeks as well as potential neuroprotective effects induced by physical training. The results showed that binge-like EtOH intake decreased GSH levels and increased LPO (estimated through TBARS evaluation); in addition, physical training was able to protect the spinal cord against EtOH-induced oxidative damage. The EtOH-induced reduction of MN density in the cervical segment may be explained by their damage susceptibility to ROS, as observed in lateral amyotrophic sclerosis [53]; in addition, physical training was not able to avoid these morphological changes.

The spinal cord is adjacent to the cerebellum and extends from the medulla oblongata to the lower edge of the first lumbar vertebra [54]. This organ contains several cell types (astrocytes, oligodendrocytes, microglia, and MN) that receive motor information from the brain and sensory information from the body [55]. The spinal cord may be sensitive to neuronal damage induced by EtOH binge drinking. Therefore, this original study evaluated the effects of repeated binge-like EtOH intake in the spinal cord and the potential protective effect provided by physical training against oxidative and morphological damage.

Binge drinking is the excessive consumption of alcohol in a short period of time that leads blood alcohol concentration of 0.8 g/L or above [56]. EtOH is metabolized through alcohol dehydrogenase (ADH), catalase, and microsomal EtOH-oxidizing system (MEOS; CYP2E1) [57]. The high EtOH intake increases the expression and activity of MEOS, which in turn generates the production of acetaldehyde through the formation of ROS, such as hydrogen peroxide ( $\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$ ) [58]. Acetaldehyde is the most toxic metabolite resulting from alcohol metabolism since it causes DNA mutations and chromosomal damage, up-regulates CYP2E1 expression, and increases oxidative stress [58,59]. Subsequently, this system produces additional ROS that may damage mitochondria, and generate cytotoxicity, inflammation, and cell death [57,60,61]. The oxidative imbalance and tissue damage caused



by EtOH have been evidenced in several regions of the central nervous system, such as the hippocampus [24,38,62] and cerebellum [19].

EtOH induces detrimental effects through different mechanisms, such as excitotoxicity, neuroinflammation, and oxidative stress [21]. A study on prenatal alcohol intake has shown that the number and the morphology of MN were significantly reduced. The authors highlighted the detrimental effects of EtOH (neurotoxicity and oxidative stress) in this critical period of the development of the nervous system [63].

Alcohol intake induces oxidative stress through the imbalance between the antioxidant system and ROS production and ultimately leads to cell dysfunction [64]. This study evaluated the oxidative stress pathway since the EtOH metabolism overproduces ROS [65,66]. Therefore, this study evaluated the imbalance in the redox system through the quantification of GSH and total antioxidant capacity; in addition, MDA was quantified to estimate the LPO induced by the ROS increase. The results of this study demonstrated that EtOH binge drinking induces oxidative damage, decreases GSH levels, and increases LPO; in addition, physical training prevents the reduction of this antioxidant and reduces LPO.

Our research group has previously evaluated the effect of EtOH on the central nervous system by using the same experimental model. Pamplona et al. (2019) [38] observed that EtOH binge drinking decreased GSH levels by 26.42% and increased TBARS levels by 50.11% in the hippocampus of rats; in addition, moderate-intensity physical training maintained GSH levels and increased LPO. Lamarão-Vieira et al. (2019) [19] evaluated the effects of EtOH in the cerebellum and reported an increase of 748.30% in TBARS levels without a reduction in GSH levels. Therefore, this study findings regarding the oxidative effects of EtOH on the central nervous system corroborate with Pamplona et al. (2019) [38] and Lamarão-Vieira et al. (2019) [19], albeit these studies demonstrated different susceptibilities among regions.

Although a significant decrease in GSH levels was induced by binge-like EtOH intake, physical training did not lead to significant changes in the antioxidant capacity.

Overall, regular moderate physical training definitely improves muscle tone, cardiovascular function, brain processes such as cognition and memory, and quality of life. Moreover, physical training significantly controls ROS-induced oxidative by up-regulating endogenous antioxidant defenses [67] and inducing neuroplasticity [68]. Among the neuroprotective mechanisms induced by physical training, the Nrf2 signaling pathway is very efficient in attenuating cellular damage caused by neurotoxic substances. Tsou et al. (2015) demonstrated the neuroprotective effect of physical training in rats exposed to 1-methyl-4-phenylpyridine (MPP<sup>+</sup>), which is the major bioactive and toxic metabolite of MPTP. The animals submitted to physical training had a lower loss of nigral dopaminergic neurons than sedentary animals; however, Nrf2 knockout animals had similar responses to MPP<sup>+</sup> irrespective of physical training [69]. More specifically, one study evaluated the effect of injecting cholera toxin-conjugated saporin to selectively kill the MN of the vastus medialis muscles of rats. The authors observed that the dendritic loss of animals subjected to physical training was significantly lower than that of sedentary animals, which is fundamental for the communication and survival of MN [70].

Physical training can be individualized by specific frequency, type, and intensity [71]. This study followed the method proposed by Arida et al. (2007) [42] and adapted by Lamarão-Vieira et al. (2019) [19], in which the animals were subjected to physical training with progressive intensity during 4 weeks and 4 cycles of binge-like EtOH intake (3 g/kg/day, 20% w/v). The results demonstrated that physical training and/or binge-like EtOH intake did not significantly change the weight of the animals since the weight growth curves were similar among groups.

The exposure of the rats to a regular and progressive physical training protocol aimed to induce a compensatory response (also known as hormesis) to exercise-induced oxidative stress and/or another condition such as EtOH exposure [71,72]. Our research group recently demonstrated that binge-like EtOH intake promoted oxidative and functional changes



in the cerebellum [19] and hippocampus [24,38,62] of rats as well as the protective effect provided by physical training.

Therefore, regular physical training induced an adaptive response by increasing GSH levels, improving the antioxidant defense against the radicals produced during training, and protecting the spinal cord against the free radicals produced by EtOH metabolism. In this study, the positive modulation of the redox system induced by physical training was observed by the increase in GSH levels, which is the main antioxidant defense mechanism against EtOH [73].

The investigation of other markers of systemic oxidative stress such as 8-iso-prostaglandin F<sub>2</sub>α (8-iso-PGF<sub>2</sub>α), sp-NOX2, proteomics, and 8-hydroxyguanosine may reveal underlying mechanisms not elucidated in this study. The 8-iso-PGF<sub>2</sub>α is formed by the peroxidation of arachidonic acid in lipids and has been shown as a good marker of oxidative damage [74]. Nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide phosphate oxidase2 (NOX2) increases ROS formation and releases anti-inflammatory molecules [75,76].

This study determined the MN density in the ventral horn of the spinal cord, which is directly related to motor activity [54]. The binge-like EtOH intake protocol reduced the MN density in the cervical segment when compared to the control group, albeit no remarkable differences were observed in the thoracic and lumbar segments. Nevertheless, physical training did not provide significant protection to spinal cord cells against EtOH exposure. It may be explained by the need for longer survival times to provide neuroprotection for the MN after oxidative stress reduction, which is an acute pathological event observed in several acute and chronic neural disorders. Moreover, several populations of short- and long-range projection interneurons are also found in the spinal cord and are likely to differently respond to EtOH intoxication. Physical training may also provide neuroprotection to other cell populations rather than MN. For instance, propriospinal interneurons play a key role to synchronize motor activity and ambulation of the spinal cord [77,78] and may distinctly respond to both EtOH-induced detrimental effects and physical training-induced neuroprotective effects investigated in this study. Therefore, these hypotheses are encouraged to be addressed in further studies.

Although physical training times were standardized for all animals, it must be emphasized that the intensity can be modulated by the maximum volume of oxygen; therefore, further studies that take into account the individual physical training capacity may more accurately determine the modulating effects to attenuate EtOH-induced damage. Furthermore, novel studies should investigate the response of different cell populations of the spinal cord such as propriospinal interneurons to EtOH intoxication as well as the potential neuroprotective effects of physical training.

## 5. Conclusions

Repeated cycles of binge-like EtOH intake caused an oxidative imbalance in the spinal cord of rats by decreasing GSH levels, increasing LPO, and reducing MN density at the cervical segment. Physical training figures as a valuable tool to restore oxidative balance since it maintained GSH levels and reduced LPO levels even under EtOH exposure. Moderate aerobic physical training is a non-pharmacological strategy to neuroprotect the spinal cord against oxidative damage induced by binge-like EtOH intake.

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### 3. CONCLUSÕES INTEGRADORAS

Demonstramos que o EtOH em padrão *binge* induz desequilíbrio bioquímico oxidativo a partir da diminuição dos níveis de glutathiona reduzida (GSH) e maior produção de lipoperoxidação (LPO), o que pôde desencadear danos oxidativos em ratos. No entanto, independentemente do treinamento físico e/ou consumo excessivo de EtOH em padrão *binge*, os níveis da capacidade antioxidante total (TEAC) não foram significativamente diferentes entre os grupos estudados. Apesar do reequilíbrio do dano oxidativo através da restauração dos níveis de GSH, indicando que o treinamento físico minimizou as alterações induzidas pelo EtOH, não podemos afirmar que houve neuroproteção dos corpos celulares de neurônios motores (NM).

Uma das principais contribuições do presente estudo foi mostrar pela primeira vez os danos oxidativos causados na medula espinal pelo padrão de consumo *binge* de EtOH. Todavia, o protocolo de treinamento físico usado não forneceu neuroproteção aos corpos celulares de neurônios motores contra a exposição ao EtOH no modelo *binge drinking*, sendo observada a redução da densidade de NM somente no segmento cervical da medula espinal (corno ventral relacionada à atividade motora) induzida pela ingestão de EtOH do tipo *binge* e não tiveram diferenças marcantes nos segmentos torácico e lombar.

Portanto, estudos futuros e outras técnicas metodológicas serão necessários para elucidar mais especificamente essa questão da densidade de neurônios motores (NM) neste protocolo de treinamento físico moderado associado ao padrão de consumo alcoólico *binge*.



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