



Powell v. State of Tex., 392 U.S. 514, 560, 560 n.3 (1968)

Defendant argued that he was afflicted with the disease of chronic alcoholism and that his appearance in public while drunk was not of his own volition. Defendant argued that to punish him for that conduct would be cruel and unusual, in violation of the Eight and Fourteenth Amendments. The Court held that there was no agreement among members of the medical community that the condition of chronic alcoholism was a disease.

The Court Provided

In 1956 the American Medical Association for the first time designated alcoholism as a major medical problem and urged that alcoholics be admitted to general hospitals for care. This significant development marked the acceptance among the medical profession of the "disease concept of alcoholism."

The term has been variously defined. The National Council on Alcoholism has defined "alcoholic" as "a person who is powerless to stop drinking and whose drinking seriously alters his normal living pattern." The American Medical Association has defined alcoholics as "those excessive drinkers whose dependence on alcohol has attained such a degree that it shows a noticeable disturbance or interference with their bodily or mental health, their interpersonal relations, and their satisfactory social and economic functioning."