

Rare Condition Causes Unusual Acquittal

VOCABULARY WORDS

1. Acquit (verb) /ə'kwɪt/ - To free from a criminal charge by a verdict of not guilty.
Example: The judge acquitted the man of all charges.
2. Condition (noun) /kən'dɪʃən/ - A state of health that affects a person's physical or mental wellbeing.
Example: Auto-brewery disorder is a rare condition.
3. Carbohydrates (noun) /ˌkɑːr.bou'haɪ.dreɪts/ - Organic compounds in food that provide energy, including sugars, starches, and fibers.
Example: People with ABS must monitor their carbohydrate intake.
4. Ferment (verb) /fər'ment/ - To undergo a chemical process that converts sugars into alcohol or acids.
Example: In ABS, carbohydrates in the body ferment into alcohol.
5. Conviction (noun) /kən'vɪk.ʃən/ - A formal declaration of guilt in a criminal case, often resulting in a legal penalty.
Example: The defendant's conviction was based on substantial evidence presented during the trial.
6. Mystery (noun) /'mɪs.tər.i/ - Something that is difficult or impossible to understand, explain, or solve.
Example: The disappearance of the ancient civilization remains a mystery to archaeologists.
7. Diagnose (verb) /ˌdaɪ.əg'nouz/ - To identify a medical condition based on its signs and symptoms.
Example: The man was diagnosed with ABS by three doctors.



A Belgian man has been acquitted of drunk driving after doctors proved he has a condition that causes his body to produce its own alcohol. This might sound like something from a police show on TV, but it actually happened. The 40-year-old man had been stopped by police several times and found to be over the legal alcohol limit, despite insisting that he had not been drinking.

In April and May 2022, the man was tested for alcohol by police after driving into lampposts, adding to his 2019 **conviction** for drunk driving. Each time, he told the police that he hadn't consumed any alcohol, leaving him confused about how he could be over the limit. The Brussels Times reported that he was puzzled by the breath test results.

The **mystery** was solved when doctors **diagnosed** him with a rare condition known as auto-brewery disorder (ABS). This condition causes some of the **carbohydrates** and sugars in a person's body to **ferment** and turn into alcohol, which then shows up on a breath test. People with ABS may appear to be drunk even if they haven't consumed alcohol. The man, who is from the city of Bruges, was unaware of his condition when he was convicted of drunk driving.

It wasn't until later, after consultations with three doctors, that his condition was diagnosed. Following this revelation, the judge **acquitted** the man of the drunk driving charges. However, the judge advised him to change his diet to prevent future incidents. A diet low in carbohydrates is expected to reduce the production of alcohol in his body, thereby lowering his chances of failing breath tests.

The man's identity has not been disclosed, but it was revealed in court that he works in a brewery. This ironic detail adds another layer to his story, emphasizing the unexpected nature of his **condition** and the importance of his dietary changes moving forward.

DISCUSSION

1. If you could create a fictional medical condition for a story, what would it be, and how would it affect the character's life?
2. What are some other ironic professions that people with certain conditions might have, and how would it impact their daily routines?
3. How important do you think diet is in managing unusual health conditions, and what dietary changes would you find most difficult to implement in your own life?
4. Imagine you are a lawyer or a doctor discovering a rare condition in a client. How would you go about proving this condition in court?
5. Have you ever been in a situation where you were misunderstood or wrongly accused of something? How did you resolve it?
6. What future technologies do you think could help diagnose rare conditions like ABS more efficiently?
7. If you were tasked with creating a public awareness campaign about ABS, what creative strategies would you use to educate people?