

A Trip of Many Steps

I have always been a dreamer. Being a dreamer has its advantages and its disadvantages. I like to think that our dreams are what keep us moving forward, what keep us optimistic. One of my dreams has been to travel to Peru and see with my own eyes the Inca city of Machu Picchu.

On June 5, 2018 I had the opportunity to travel with 18 other recovering alcoholics and addicts to Peru. It was a trip of a lifetime. I am grateful for having the opportunity with others in recovery and grateful to be able to share some of the things I learned along my way.

When I think about learning recovery lessons, many of the same lessons were learned during my trip. First, of course, is Step 1: Powerlessness. Powerlessness showed itself in many ways. As I said, I have always been a dreamer. My dreams of hiking the Inca trail were not founded in reality. I found I had a 20 year old mind in a 60 year old body. This I was powerless over. I had not prepared myself physically for the journey. Now on the trail, I was powerless over this fact. Disappointed, I accepted my limitations, found I did not have to take myself too seriously and realized that a change of course is always okay. I celebrated hiking 7 miles to our 1st camp at 10,000 feet above sea level and was grateful for the experience. I was also grateful the next evening to be in a warm bed while the rest of our group hiked on through rain, sleet, snow, and hail.

While on the trail, I was awed by the wonder of God and the beauty he has created in our world. Nature has always helped me feel more connected to my higher power, this power greater than myself was evident in every cloud, stream, mountain, flower and bird.

Similarly, I was reminded that we are never alone. We can always ask for help. Whether we are depending on the power of the group, as we did to survive the hike, or asking our higher power for the strength to do the next right thing, we are never alone.

My trip was full of steps. One more step to make it up this hill. One more step to get down this slippery group of stairs. I was reminded that we take one step at a time. When we work the steps, we work them in order, one at a time. When we have completed the step, we move on to the next one. When things get tough, we must concentrate only on the next step. Being present, in the moment, is necessary to navigate hard and complicated paths. This I also learned on the trail.

Finally, with a lot of little steps we can complete the trail. Our trail may not look like our neighbors', but it is ours and we own it. We make our own little steps and before we know it, we have grown and arrived. Arrived at Machu Picchu and see it with our own eyes.

- A grateful recovering dentist



VISIT THE UPDATED NCCDP WEBSITE
www.nccaringdental.com

Thank You!

The NCCDP says farewell and thank you to
Dr. Clifford Feingold, DDS,
for his service on our Board of Directors.

Welcome

Dr. Kenneth Sadler, DDS,
appointed as newest member of
our Board of Directors

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CARING *Connections*

JUST REACH OUT

Volume 18 , Issue 2

NORTH CAROLINA CARING DENTAL PROFESSIONALS

Beware of False Guarantees

By Nancy Davis, Executive Director

Lately I have been receiving articles and newsletters about the unethical promotional marketing of treatment centers. The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) adopted a Public Policy Statement on Ethical Promotion and Patient Recruitment by Addiction Treatment Programs, Adoption Date: May 25, 2018. The policy emphasizes, "As the number and type of treatment program have proliferated, marketing efforts to attract patients have become increasingly competitive and sophisticated."



Why am I devoting a newsletter to this topic? It is impossible to overstate the negative impact that substance abuse has on individuals, families, and society. Addiction is arguably the greatest public health threat we face in the US. It seems more and more families are affected. Recently, the US opioid crisis has shed light on the dangers of substance abuse as prescription or illicit opioid use was responsible for 66 percent of the 63,632 drug overdoses in 2016 (CDC, 2017)

My concern is how many of our dental professionals have a loved one, employee, friend, or an acquaintance who is suffering from addiction. How many are in search of finding the appropriate treatment facility. One of the issues taking place within the addiction treatment industry is having the wrong person in outreach positions using their own personal recovery as the marketing tool to entice the suffering addict or family member to their facility. Many people in recovery have gone back to school and had the education to become clinicians or be employed in business development. However, there are many that are in recovery that are not qualified to work in getting others into treatment.

It appears the treatment industry is at a crossroads and there are some bad actors out there. Procedures and policies need to be in place or the treatment industry is going to be seriously harmed. Addiction treatment can transform lives with a positive impact on society. It is often the difference between life and death, or between productive recovery and a life of despair.

The NCCDP urges that parents, family members and loved ones of those suffering from addiction take the same amount of time, education, and due diligence they would if their loved one was suffering from cancer, heart disease or diabetes regarding their treatment options. Become educated consumers, research and research some more. Get feedback from professionals that have worked with various treatment facilities. The NCCDP does this with every treatment facility where we refer our dental professionals or their families. Our program is for every dental professional in North Carolina. We have an extensive list of resources that can be made available with a phone call or email.



North Carolina Caring
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“I Have Compassion Fatigue?”

By J. William "Bill" Claytor, Jr, DDS, MAGD

I recently had a conversation with a dentist about how dentistry used to be his passion because it gave him energy and motivation. Recently, though, he had been feeling emotionally exhausted, unable to focus, and out of control in so many areas of his life. He asked if I knew why he was experiencing these feelings. Have you had this experience in your dental career yet?



I think those of us in the dental profession can relate to what he is experiencing. It's hard to keep all the "plates spinning" while keeping a positive attitude. We become emotionally drained and exhausted due to daily pressures. Specifically, you may be experiencing a symptom of burnout called "compassion fatigue" which is related to constantly having to "perform" by addressing patient or staff questions and situations that are often draining and exhausting. This intense relationship drains you of your energy and empathy. We see examples of compassion fatigue in people who have reached a point in a relationship that they "don't have anything else to give to the relationship" and just want out of the turmoil. Sometimes the individual becomes sarcastic and cynical with their dealings with other people at work or home. This change in attitude is sometimes hard for the individual to see and can only be noticed by others. This plays out with the occasional patient that "gets under our skin" or is a constant "thorn in our side".

What I find interesting about this scenario is that he has recently noticed changes in the way he feels that make him uncomfortable and are concerning because they are affecting his overall wellbeing. You may be experiencing some level of burnout which is a response to the chronic, excessive, and prolonged emotional stress of dealing extensively with other human beings resulting in doubts about one's work competence, emotional state, and value. People who recognize the early signs of burnout are fortunate in many respects because burnout is easier to prevent than to treat. Burnout and poor physical health are strongly related and are not necessarily age-related. Younger dentists are experiencing burnout at an alarming rate. Recognize your body and what you are experiencing or feeling. Descent into burnout is quick and the recovery time is very slow, maybe taking 2-4 years, if not enough time and therapy have occurred. Share your feelings and emotions with a trusted colleague for feedback or seek professional help from a therapist or counselor if symptoms don't improve. An excellent source for information and help with burnout is your NC Caring Dental Professionals Program (800-230-3934).

Finally, if you are truly experiencing some level of burnout and don't address this quickly, you can be drawn into more alcohol and/or potential drug use to cope with your stress, depression, and uneasiness.

(Note: It is important to initially rule out all systemic medical conditions that may be related to exhaustion and fatigue, e.g., low thyroid, low testosterone, etc.)

PLEASE CONSIDER

Please consider making a tax deductible donation to the NC Caring Dental Professionals Jake Thorpe Fund. This money is used to provide interest free loans to assist impaired dental professionals. The NCCDP was created for the dental team and their families with the intention of promoting a healthy recovery and lifestyle. You can be a part of this health and wellness effort by making a tax deductible donation TODAY!!!

Dr. Mark Johnson, DDS – Chairman, Fundraising Committee

PEARLS OF WISDOM

"Change is scary, even if it promises a better life."

– AA Grapevine

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Registration Form - Opioid Prescription Writing

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PEARLS OF WISDOM

"Imperfection offers me the freedom of a million potentials."

– AA Grapevine



Representatives of the NCCDP are always available to share the history and mission of the NCCDP with various groups, including hygiene schools, dental schools and any other professional dental organization.

Please call us to schedule a presentation: 1-800-230-3934

Recovery in Abu Dhabi

I was fortunate to recently be able to travel to the United Arab Emirates to visit family who have lived there for a few years. It was my first trip out of the country since entering recovery for alcoholism, and there were a few challenges; however, since it is a Muslim country and alcohol is not as ubiquitous as it is in the United States, it was a great choice for country to visit.



The biggest challenge was the airplane- I was immediately offered a mimosa or glass of wine as I was settling into business class. I politely declined, but was then handed a menu with dinner and drink options- lots of drink options. In the past, this would have been wonderful, welcomed, and appreciated- and I would have been passed out drunk a few hours into the flight. If I was lucky, I would remain unconscious; if not, I would likely cause some kind of scene on the plane. Thank God for my sobriety.

The country itself is very wealthy and it is apparent. In the middle of a sprawling desert is enough construction to make one's mind spin. Buildings, amusement parks, malls, Lego Land, restaurants, stadiums- all going up at the same time. Construction cranes crowded the skyline of the city. Abu Dhabi is shifting their economy from oil, which will be depleted in a few decades, to tourism. They are becoming slightly more relaxed with their restrictions, including restrictions on alcohol, to support that. What I found is that alcohol is not served in stand-alone restaurants or bars. It can only be served in establishments attached to a hotel, which limits the number of places serving alcohol. It was very easy to be able to enjoy a fine dining restaurant and not have to walk past a fully stocked bar or see other patrons sipping on pretty martinis. There were not ABC stores that I could see. I was told that alcohol is obtained by Emiratis in a more covert manner. Such as they drive up to a store, roll down their car window a crack, and someone will come out with a paper bag and slip the alcohol to them. Discretion is essential.

Before I left on my trip, I searched the internet for AA meetings in Abu Dhabi. I don't know if I was more surprised that they existed or that there was only one, maybe two, a day for the entire city.

My first two meetings were in a "little church" (that's what you tell the taxi driver to take you there) and the third one at a Psychiatry and Neurology Center. The "little church" was located at one of the only churches in Abu Dhabi, St. Andrew's Church Center. They were held in a small room and were almost exactly like what we have here in the U.S. A group of 10-16 people milled around the refreshment table, sipping coffee or Arabic tea and Arabic sweets (dried dates are a popular choice- almost like candy). The groups were entirely made up of ex-pats from such areas as the U.S., Australia, Scotland, and Britain. I later learned that people from the Emirates do not seek treatment in their country due to privacy concerns, and instead, many of them travel to London for treatment. They do not attend the AA meetings offered in their country. The message was universal. I heard my life and struggles summed up by these people from entirely different areas of the country- the loneliness, isolation, blackouts, loss of control, and hopelessness that we alcoholics all experience. I heard of one young British girl speak of relapsing on the plane over and how she cannot accept that she will never be able to drink again. She accepts that she's and alcoholic and drug addict and she has been in 3 rehabs over the years but is bitter that she cannot enjoy alcohol like the "normals" and is trying to not drink - one day at a time.

One man with seven years of sobriety talked of his decade of denial before recovery in which he attended numerous detox centers and still refused to believe he was like those “other people” in AA. He was reprimanded at work for his drinking, alienated his family, was in several accidents that sent him to the emergency room, but he still refused to accept that he had a problem.

It was a comforting feeling to have a respite in an unfamiliar country with a different culture, different language, and strange things. When I walked into the meeting, I felt at home. The familiar rituals of the Serenity Prayer and reading AA literature among a group of fellow alcoholics centered me and reminded me of how grateful I am to be sober today and able to enjoy traveling to another country.

- A grateful dentist in recovery

Created to promote a healthy recovery & lifestyle for the dental team and their families