



NEWSLETTER

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President's Message

AMSAODD was honored this autumn by receiving the Annual Outstanding Program Award for 1987 from ADPA, the Alcohol and Drug Problems Association of North America. The award gives me an opportunity to reflect on the accomplishments that ADPA chose to recognize, and to thank our AMSAODD members who worked so hard to achieve these results.

ADPA recognized our accomplishments in three areas: AIDS, drug dependence as a disease, and certification.

AIDS: The subcommittee on AIDS, led by Larry Siegel, MD, has worked to improve care of patients with AIDS in several ways. One is AMSAODD's annual conference on AIDS and chemical dependency, attended by well over 100 physicians in Ft. Lauderdale last year. A second conference is scheduled for February 18-20, 1988, in Phoenix, Arizona.

Another way was publication of the pamphlet, "Guidelines for Facilities Treating Chemically Dependent Patients At Risk for AIDS or Infected by HIV Virus." Carefully conceptualized and written, this pamphlet synthesizes what the physician needs to know about AIDS and chemical dependency, and answers an urgent clinical need not only for information about AIDS, but also about leadership on moral positions for physicians in this ethical thicket. AMSAODD has distributed 11,000 copies; limited quantities are available from the Chicago and New York offices.

Recognition that drug dependencies--not just alcoholism--are diseases:

Policy makers and physicians who work with drug dependent patients have increasingly wanted an explicit statement that drug dependence is a disease. Last summer Drs. Jess Bromley and David E. Smith, along with Manny Steindler, our executive director, worked to see a resolution to this effect adopted as a policy position by the AMA.

AMSAODD certification of physicians with special knowledge about drug dependence and alcoholism. (Certification Committee, Anthony B. Radcliffe, MD, chair)

With over 700 physicians certified in 1986, and nearly as many scheduled to sit for the examination in 1987, the certification process has been enthusiastically received in many quarters. Physicians who wanted a measure of their expertise in the CD area, and clinical workers throughout the field who despaired of the low standards of training, knowledge, and clinical skill of physicians treating chemically dependent people, have welcomed our attempts to raise the standards of clinical practice.

We are honored that ADPA values these areas of AMSAODD's work as much as we do, and heartily thank the hundreds of AMSAODD members who have helped so much to attain these goals.

Margaret Bean-Bayog, MD
President, AMSAODD

"I know of more than one chemical dependency treatment center requiring prospective patients to submit negative AIDS test results before the center will admit them," Larry Siegel, MD, chair of AMSAODD's AIDS & Chemical Dependency committee, told AMSAODD Newsletter. Responsibility for setting such policy varies depending on the facility's ownership (private vs. non-profit vs. government) etc.

Despite the media blitz about AIDS, Dr. Siegel believes that health care professionals' fear about this disease is getting more pronounced. He knows of surgeons who have refused to operate on people with AIDS; and of doctors and nurses who would not care for AIDS patients in any way. He also thinks that most CD professionals are unaware that alcohol, marijuana, and narcotics are immunosuppressants, directly affecting the immune system.

"Everyone thinks that AIDS means death--that it's 100 percent fatal. Not so. Ten percent of all patients diagnosed in 1981 were still alive in 1987. What we're seeing is recovery as a possibility--not cure, but recovery as in chemical dependency recovery. Some people with AIDS can recover, even though the period of time is unknown."

Dr. Siegel is deeply concerned about the physician or nurse who says, "If a patient's going to die in three months or a year, why treat his or her alcoholism, chemical dependency, or any other disease for that matter?"

To Dr. Siegel, "this attitude is incredibly inappropriate for two reasons: Everyone doesn't die, and if we treat the chemical dependency, the patient may survive longer. If that patient is just HIV--infected, he or she may not progress from infection to the disease of AIDS. There are co-factors in the progression to AIDS that we don't understand, but we do know that alcohol and other drugs damage the immune system. So if the patient can recover from chemical dependency, he or she may well have a better shot at recovering from AIDS."

How can we lessen this professional fear of AIDS? Education, such as AMSAODD's AIDS Forum in Phoenix February 18-20, 1988, for which Dr. Siegel is co-chair.

A new field called "psychoneuroimmunology" is examining the connection between the mind, the immune system, and neurotransmitters. This approach could be invaluable to patients who have both AIDS and chemical dependency, as well as to prevention efforts. Dr. Siegel said that George Solomon, MD, of the VA Hospital in Sepulveda, California, is a leader in this new field and will discuss psychoneuroimmunology and AIDS at the AMSAODD AIDS Forum.

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AMSAODD physicians were well represented among the speakers at Freedom '87 in Philadelphia Oct. 27-Nov. 1. This first annual national conference on alcoholism and chemical dependency drew about 1,000 participants.

Co-sponsored by the Geisinger Foundation, Marworth alcoholism treatment centers, and with CME credits offered by AMSAODD, conference co-chairs were Geraldine O. Delaney of New Jersey's Alina Lodge, and Conway Hunter Jr., MD, of Georgia. Mrs. Delaney, 80, received the first annual Geisinger National Achievement Award from Henry Hood, MD, for her "caring, commitment and courage" in alcoholism/CD treatment.

Presentations by AMSAODD members included Max A. Schneider, MD, on AIDS and on smoking; Stanley E. Gitlow, MD, on clinical concepts of alcoholism; Theodore R. Clark, MD, (and his wife Gail Clark, RN, PhD) on family. Ted Clark was hospitalized with angina pains during the conference and is reportedly improving after bypass surgery at the University of Pennsylvania Hospital.

Maxwell N. Weisman, MD, spoke on psychiatry and CD; Sheila B. Blume, MD, on women and alcohol; Abraham Twerski, MD, on counselor wellness; G. Douglas Talbott, MD, on relapse; Thomas A. Haymond, MD, on genetics; William J. McKenzie, Jr, MD, on various addictions; ADAMHA administrator Donald Ian Macdonald, MD, on adolescent addiction; Anne Geller, MD, on "Biology of the First 90 Days"; David E. Smith, MD, on cocaine and on differential diagnoses; William L. Griffith, MD, on treating CD young adults.

Three physicians from abroad were presentors: Drs. George Charles Wilson of Sydney, Australia (AMSAODD member), and Eve Hickey and Brian Wells of London, England.

Open fellowship meetings were offered every evening by AA, Al-Anon, OA (Overeaters Anonymous), NA, ACoA, and JACS (Jewish Alcoholics and Chemical Dependent Persons).

"The single leading cause of death among recovering people is nicotine," announced Max A. Schneider, MD, immediate past president of AMSAODD, at Freedom '87. "We lose 40 to 50 people per day to drugs of abuse, 350 per day to alcohol, and one thousand a day in this country to nicotine. About 30% of adults smoke, but 80% of recovering people smoke.

"Nicotine is a severe mind-altering drug of high addiction. It should be viewed in that light--not as a bad habit--and be attended to by addictionologists." In Dr. Schneider's opinion, "a person is not clean and sober unless he or she has stopped smoking and is thus rid of the nicotine."

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Dear Editor:

Further to the note in the September-October AMSAODD Newsletter, Drs. Percy Ryberg and Frank Seixas seek documents, minutes of meetings, letters, anecdotal stories, etc. that shed light on the early history of the New York City Medical Society on Alcoholism [predecessor to AMSAODD]. Material, or copies thereof, should be sent to Claire Osman in the New York AMSAODD office.

Drs. Ryberg (914-928-2256) and Seixas (914-478-5640) can be contacted directly if so desired.

Percy E. Ryberg, MD
Central Valley, NY

Dear Editor:

The Newsletter is simply one of the best things we have going for us. It's informative and most helpful. I know there are many to thank but I'll start with you. Keep up the excellent work --this single publication helps keep us on track.

Anthony B. Racliffe, MD
Fontana, CA

Dear Editor:

I know many others have written to you in praise of our Newsletter as the best medium informing our membership of what's going on in and around our organization, but let me add my thanks for your publishing Manny Steindler's statement on "The Right to Be Sick Without Punishment" [September issue, p. 1]. In addition to being informative, it was--at the same time--intelligent, thought-provoking discussion, and called on each of us to take some action. Let's have more such "information."

Maxwell N. Weisman, MD
Baltimore, MD

[Indeed yes, let's! We are always delighted to hear from AMSAODD readers. Please write a Letter to the Editor--this is your column--Editor]

IN MEMORIAM

Richard N. Schmidt, MD, alcoholism and drug dependency specialist, of Cleveland.

Martin J. Valaske, MD, pathologist, of Annapolis and Washington, died in early November of arteritis. A dedicated AMSAODD member who frequently represented the society at Washington hearings and forums, Dr. Valaske had been ASMAODD chair for the District of Columbia, and was co-chair of the Public Policy Committee.

Until about three weeks before his death, he directed the AMSAODD Review Course in Washington (held Nov. 5-7). The course was a success: 194 registrants, 25 facilitators (at 25 tables), and another six speakers (faculty).

Both physicians were certified by AMSAODD in 1986.

NCA GOLD KEY TO AMSAODD

The National Council on Alcoholism will give AMSAODD its Gold Key Award in 1988 for outstanding contributions to the field of alcoholism at a national level.

AMSAODD will be the first organization to receive this prestigious award in NCA's over 40-year history. Previous recipients have included former First Lady Betty Ford; AA co-founders Bill Wilson and Bob Smith, MD; E. M. Jellinek; Ruth Fox, MD; NCA founder Marty Mann; Sen. Harold Hughes; entertainers Jason Robards and Gordon MacRae; alcoholism philanthropists R. Brinkley Smithers and Joan (Mrs. Ray) Kroc.

The Gold Key Award will be presented to AMSAODD during the NCA Forum/AMSAODD Medical-Scientific Conference in Washington, DC, April 21-24.

FROM URUGUAY

Fernando Cortinas, MD, who attended the Rutgers Summer School of Alcohol Studies on a Stepping Stones Foundation scholarship in 1986, writes that last February "we opened our first chemical dependency treatment center in Uruguay. It has been a hard task but we finally could do it. We are very happy and proud to say that the first treatment center was built with the effort of the whole Uruguayan community."

Newport in May p. 6
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A new bill, one that would provide minimum health insurance coverage to all American workers through employer-financed plans, offered no coverage for alcoholism and other drug addiction treatment. In addition, this bill would pre-empt any state laws now in effect.

Sponsored by Sen. Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts (and Rep. Henry Waxman of California for the House), the bill is S. 1265: Minimum Health Benefits for All Workers Act of 1987.

"This bill is important to AMSAODD," LeClair Bissell, MD, told AMSAODD Newsletter. Dr. Bissell chairs AMSAODD's membership committee. "Many of our members work in free standing or hospital-based chemical dependency units. These depend in large part on third party payment to subsidize patients in treatment. A major change in that coverage could have an awfully big impact on our ability to deliver care, and would also determine to whom we can deliver it. There's already a change in reimbursement due to the new DRG regulations.

"Apparently Kennedy and Waxman want employers to pay a certain level of health insurance for all their employees," continued Dr. Bissell. "To keep costs fairly reasonable, they've been trying to cut anything that might look like a frill. Chemical dependency and mental health were both going to be left out."

The original form of this Kennedy-Waxman bill excluded any coverage for alcoholism, other drug treatment, or mental health.

Due to lobbying by mental health organizations, mental health is now included in this bill.

But alcoholism and other drug dependencies are not.

"Kennedy's staff has opted to include a mental health amendment. The consolation prize for us is that the definition of mental disorder will be the one in the International Classification of Diseases, 9th Edition, which includes alcoholism and drug abuse," Christine Lubinski, of the National Council on Alcoholism's Washington office, told AMSAODD Newsletter. "Essentially he's trying to put us in through the back door without explicitly referencing alcoholism or drug dependency in the statute itself."

Lubinski said that Kennedy is currently unwilling to consider a discrete alcohol and drug benefit. "The mental health benefit is 45 days inpatient, 20 days outpatient. It's unclear who eligible providers would be, although they may be psychiatrists only. It's also unclear whether freestanding treatment centers would be included, or only hospital-based care."

The bill would supercede all the insurance laws in different states: if a state law currently provides coverage for diagnosed alcoholism--inpatient, or outpatient, or family--the state law would be wiped away completely, and treatment coverage by insurance companies would again be optional.

Lubinski says that the bill may be marked up at committee level the first week in December, and that "we probably won't see floor action by the end of this year. From Kennedy's perspective, we [in the CD field] are not left out any longer."

Dr. Bissell said that "it would be wise for AMSAODD members to remain aware of the progress of this bill and to communicate their personal opinions on the subject to their own legislators."

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AMA IMPAIRED PHYSICIAN AWARD TO STEINDLER

AMSAODD executive director Manny Steindler received an award at the 8th annual AMA national conference on the impaired physician, held Oct. 8-11 in Chicago.

The award was given in recognition and acknowledgement of the contributions that he has made over a 15-year period to the AMA's impaired physician effort.

FUTURE MEETINGS

Sponsored or co-sponsored by AMSAODD (one-time listing for co-sponsored conferences).

To assure listing, please send announcement to Newsletter editor Lucy Robe.

AMSAODD Certification

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AMSAODD's 2nd Annual Forum on AIDS and Chemical

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Conference Information (AIDS), PO Box 81691, Atlanta, GA 30366.

Phone: (404) 458-3382.

AMSAODD Board Meeting:
Sun. Feb. 21, Phoenix, AZ.

Australia & New Zealand Fellowship Tour: Apr. 15 - May 5. (led by Drs. Maxwell Weisman & George C. Wilson)

Agency International, 22 Lenox Pointe N.E., Atlanta, GA 30324.

Phone: (404) 266-2200.

AMSAODD Medical Scientific Conference:

Washington, DC, (Hyatt Regency-Crystal City)

Apr. 21-24.

AMSAODD Board Meeting:
Apr. 20.

Ruth Fox Course for Physicians: Apr. 21

AMSAODD Awards Luncheon:
Apr. 23

AMSAODD, 12 W. 21 St, New York, NY 10010

Phone: (212) 206-6770.

NEW BOOKS

To assure listing, please send announcements of new books by AMSAODD members to

Newsletter editor Lucy Robe.

Pierre André, MD: "Drug Addiction: Learn About It Before Your Kids Do!" (Health Communications)

Donald M. Gallant, MD: "Alcoholism - A Guide to Diagnosis, Intervention, and Treatment" (W.W. Norton)

Roland E. Herrington, MD, and David G. Benzer, MD, eds: "Alcohol and Drug Abuse Handbook" (Warren H. Green, Inc.)

Paul M. D'Amico, DO: "Massive Myths With Simple Solutions" (Box Y, Livingston Manor, NY 12758)

Terry A. Rustin, MD: "Quit and Stay Quit--Medical Treatment Plan for Smokers" and "Facilitator's Guide" (Discovery Publishing Company, 9731 Greenwillow, Houston, TX 77096))

Sheila B. Blume, MD, and Henry R. Lesieur, PhD: "Compulsive Gambling: A Concern for Families with Alcoholism and Other Drug Problems" (pamphlet, NCA)



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