

Medicine and The Fog of Recovery

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Consider this. Medicine is supposed to be about people. Medicine is supposed to help all of us. Medicine is supposed to provide both routine and emergency services to those in need. Medicine is supposed to be of benefit to all members of society regardless of class or income. And above all, medicine is supposed to be about caring and supporting people. If these statements are closely aligned with your views, then chances are you have never suffered from a debilitating addiction.

Now, consider this. Medicine is about money. Medicine is there to make money off your illness for healthcare providers and administrators. Medicine is there to generate income and profits from your suffering for healthcare institutions and their investors. Medicine is only there for the benefit of those who can afford it. And more than anything, medicine is there to judge and devalue those who cannot afford it. If these statements are closely aligned with your experiences and impressions are, then you have probably suffered from a debilitating addiction.

How we view things - people, businesses, governments - is often determined by how they treat us. If we benefit from their actions, then we usually have very positive outlooks and opinions about them. If we are ignored or harmed by them, then we tend to have negative impressions and feelings about them. And today, when it comes to the addiction population in the United States, the medical industry, like the rest of society, generally looks down upon those of us who are or were affected by substance abuse. Thus, while services are available to help addicts, overall they are usually provided too little, too late, and with too much judgement of who and what we are to be of any real use.

Having spent nearly a decade of my earlier life immersed in substance misuse, and having spent the last 15 years of my life working as a physician providing healthcare to people who suffer from drug dependency issues, I can tell you that, in general, the average addict in the USA today gets limited access to healthcare, and the healthcare they do get access to is often insufficient, inferior, and even harmful. Additionally, for a large number of us, that healthcare is only provided as an afterthought and secondarily to the primary means by which our

society addresses addiction: prosecution and incarceration.

Most of us are raised with the image of the good doctor in our heads: a kind of imaginary "Marcus Welby, MD" who will always be there for us when we are in need of medical care. However, the reality is that our credit rating is of greater concern to the health care industry than is our wellbeing. After all, once you enter the world of mega-medicine, you are not longer Patty, or Richard, or Sheila. No, you are a case number, a medical record number, or some other sequence of digits that ultimately funnel back to your financial resources instead of being focused upon you as a person.

For those of us who have beat addiction, left our substance abuse behaviors behind us, and have been able to establish and maintain long-term stable recoveries, being part of a second-class patient population is often a thing of the past. Yet, if the horizons of our stability are suddenly and unexpectedly eroded and jeopardized by the fog of recovery, fears of mistreatment and judgmental persecution can once again become real and presents concerns. After all, getting and staying clean is often done with little if any help from the medical professionals who are supposed to help those in need. So, why would any of us want to re-expose ourselves to such abuse again? This makes medical mal-judgement and mis-treatment some of the greatest impediments to getting relief from the fog of recovery.

Being an insider of the medical megalopolis, I have seen the man behind the curtain, the ones who pull the strings, the innumerable ghosts in the machine, and I can tell you this: while there are some very good and very caring healthcare providers who know how to, and do, properly care for people suffering from addiction, they are few and far between. Instead, it is the philosophy of the old wicked witch of DC - Nancy Reagan - that still predominates the addiction treatment thinking, planning and programs of today: just say no. Sadly, at street level, that translates into saying no to caring, no to helping, and no to those of us who are in need. Thus, in the end, the person who should be there to assist you - doctor, nurse, counselor, administrator - may just as likely push you farther down that slippery, foggy slope.

What then do you do if you've climbed up to the sobriety mountaintop, built a fulfilling and purposeful life there, and are now faced with the possibility of sliding off its north face? First, to solve any problem, you must first admit it exists. Next, to move from problem to solution, you have to find individuals and resources which will support your well-being. But, proceed with caution. Don't assume that just

because the person in front of you is wearing a white lab coat that they are your white knight in shining armor. For it is a minority of healthcare workers today who really know, who really get it, and who really understand that addiction is an illness and not a crime that needs hope instead of judgement, help instead of prosecution, and care instead of incarceration.

If you've achieved stable recovery, then you have a lot to be proud of, and you also have a lot to lose. You have seen rock bottom and have worked unbelievably hard to never hit it again. Yet, if you ever question your stability, or feel the tinges of cravings calling from the haze, do not assume House, MD, is just waiting for you to walk through the door. Be careful. Cherish yourself. Value your many accomplishments and actively seek out help from those who are truly focused on your health rather than your wallet, who are truly concerned about identifying solutions instead of misdeeds, and who forego sound-bite slogans in favor of understanding the many realities of addiction. More than anything else, by taking the time to find the right people to help you, you are investing in yourself, your future, and your abstinence from the fog of recovery.

Robert offers anonymous and confidential substance abuse recovery telephone coaching to help those who wish to stabilize and maintain their recovery from substance abuse. Recovery coaching with Robert is available worldwide to anyone fluent in English who can reach him at **786-262-5750** (USA). For more information, please visit **<http://trafn.com/coach.html>**