

THE IPRN NEWS

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“Addiction is a disease which can affect anyone and it doesn’t matter who you are or what your job is.”

The Utah School

The Iowa Pharmacy Recovery Network was pleased to be able to send 5 students (2 from the University of Iowa and 3 from Drake University) and a University of Iowa faculty advisor to the School on Alcoholism and Drug Dependencies in June 2006. The Iowa Board of Pharmacy also sent 3 Compliance Officers to the school. They are sharing their reflections on what they learned about addiction and the pharmacy profession with us. They are bringing back to our communities, our schools and our profession the message of hope. It is so rewarding to hear from someone that the school has changed their lives and their perspectives. It is wonderful to know that they have had “The Utah Experience”!

Reflections

The Utah School of Alcoholism and Drug Dependency was an experience that I will never forget. Before going to the Utah School I didn’t understand what addiction really is and what it can do to a person. At the Utah School, I learned exactly what addiction is and how it affects not only pharmacists and health care professionals but the general public. Addiction is a disease which can affect anyone and it doesn’t matter who you are or what your job is. I am now much more sensitive to people coming in to the pharmacies that I work at and I know what to look for if a colleague or family member may have an addiction problem.

I met a lot of people that I never would have met if I didn’t go to the Utah School and will hopefully have life long relationships with some of those people. I’ve learned so much from all of the speakers, recovering pharmacists and other students. I hope to share my knowledge that I have learned with other pharmacists, pharmacy students and anyone that wants to know more about addiction.

Heather Heit

Vice President, University of Iowa Pharmacy Recovery Network

We are committed to excellence.

Reflections continued...

“The University of Utah takes the reflections we see of ourselves and others and teaches us how to see them differently.”

“I did not learn how to fix anyone but I learned a much more valuable lesson, self-reflection.”

The Iowa Pharmacy Recovery Network is in need of caring volunteers throughout the State of Iowa. The profession needs you to make a difference!

Reflections are a common part of life. We see one most every day in the mirror. But there are other ways to see our reflection and also to reflect within ourselves. The University of Utah takes the reflections we see of ourselves and others and teaches us how to see them differently. Alcoholism is a real problem among the pharmacy world that we have brought ourselves into. It can not be ignored anymore than the other professional concerns we grapple with each day. But chemical dependency is not something that we can easily visualize or a hat that we would be proud to wear. I had the opportunity through the support of the Iowa Pharmacy Foundation and Drake University to attend the week long conference in Utah. We are told upon arrival that this event has the potential to change our lives and if we allow it to, it can.

I met a pharmacist who shared his heart and the dark shadow that he walked under for years. The gloom and weight of a drug addiction almost ended the career and more importantly the life he had worked to build. After he finished his story, he took my hand and asked if there was anything I needed help with, anything I was struggling with. This man, once so broken and hurting, was now trying to help me figure out the burdens in my life that were weighing me down. It was with that conversation that I truly got an understanding of the twelve steps and the process of self reflection. I went to Utah with the idea that I was going to learn how to help fix people. What did I think I could fix? And since when was everyone else broken and did I have the machinery to rebuild them? I did not learn how to fix anyone but I learned a much more valuable lesson, self-reflection.

Over the week I did learn steps to take in assisting those in need; advocacy and awareness, positivism and treatment options, group support and compassion. I witnessed a host of emotionally taxing and uplifting events and tears of joy and pain. This morning I looked in the mirror and made a choice, a small positive change, to smile instead of frown. Our day is full of these small chances to make a positive change in our life which is a perspective that never made sense to me until I witnessed it strength in Utah.

I thank my Utah mentor for his support and willingness to share throughout the week and those who allowed to me to learn from their pain. Hello, my name is Kayla and I am a friend.

**Kayla Hatt
Drake University
Pharm.D. candidate 2008**

Thank you to Heather and Kayla for sharing your experience, strength and hope. We are proud to have you as members of our committee in Iowa.

Thank you to all of our volunteers!

O.I.G. Exclusions List

“This OIG list makes it virtually impossible to work in any healthcare field that receives state or federal money.”

“...the OIG has broadened its scope to include any healthcare professionals who has had any licensure suspension or action.”

IPRN has maintained a 24-hour, toll-free hotline. Calls made to the hotline included individuals needing help and concerned others.

The toll free number is: (877) 890-IPRN

An issue for pharmacy professionals is the exclusions list that has been maintained by the Office of the Inspector General. The list is found on the OIG website <http://oig.hhs.gov/>. “The Congress of the United States has worked diligently to protect the health and welfare of the nation's elderly and poor by implementing legislation to prevent certain individuals and businesses from participating in Federally-funded health care programs. The OIG, under Congressional mandate, established a program to exclude individuals and entities (sections 1128 and 1156 of the Social Security Act)”.

This letter was sent by the Southern Ohio Pharmacy Recovery Organization:

Dear Recovering Healthcare Professionals,

We are alerting you regarding an increasing nationwide trend to blacklist recovering healthcare professionals (HCP) from practicing in their chosen professions. The HIPAA law enacted in 1996 includes provisions that exclude recovering individuals from participating in all state and federally funded programs (Medicaid and Medicare). The Office of the Inspector General (OIG), a branch of The Department of Health and Human Services, is compiling and executing a list of healthcare professionals charged or convicted of healthcare billing fraud for monetary gains. However, the OIG has broadened its scope to include any healthcare professionals who has had any licensure suspension or action. Furthermore, any individual granted "treatment in lieu of conviction" is also eligible for the mandatory 5-year exclusion list. This list intended to punish those who committed healthcare billing fraud is now affecting recovering healthcare professionals who have come in for treatment, "come clean with their licensing boards," successfully faced their criminal and licensure proceedings, and been permitted and approved to return to practice as part of the solution, not part of the problem any longer. This OIG list makes it virtually impossible to work in any healthcare field that receives state or federal money. We cannot accept that the framers of the exclusion list intended to affect those healthcare professionals who are were not guilty of billing fraud. Most healthcare professionals in their active addiction committed theft of drugs, were punished, and were given a direction through recovery to regain their licenses and practice again. This OIG exclusion punishment does not fit the crimes. The effect of the list on all state varies, for now, but the OIG list will filter down to each state. We must all take a stand now as a community of healthcare professionals (pharmacists, doctors, nurses, and dentists) to ensure that the path of a recovering healthcare professional is not blocked by this devastating OIG blacklist.

Dedicated to being part of the solution.

Letter by James R. Mullins, MD

The exclusion list affects all healthcare professionals. Excerpts from a letter by James R. Mullins, MD, Portsmouth, OH:

“How can we convince a young physician, nurse or pharmacist to “come clean” when the information can be used to ruin their professional lives with economic complications that may continue for another 7 years?”

“I appeal for your assistance in this matter. This process must be modified to be fair and just. The future of our ability to rehabilitate chemically dependent health care providers may well depend on changing that section of the Social Security Act (Section 1128 B) to allow for adjudication.”
James R. Mullins, MD

It appears that a bureaucratic glitch is now threatening the livelihood and ongoing recovery of many health care professionals who are identified and seek treatment. The office of Inspector General (OIG) has involved an exclusionary rule that is forcing recovering individuals to be terminated from employment and effectively prevented from working for at least 5 years. This exclusion is being applied without a hearing or due process and is having a chilling effect on our efforts to coax unidentified health care professionals to acknowledge their chemical dependency and embrace that identity. Without open and sincere commitment to the recovery principles, including full disclosure, there is little chance of true abstinence and meaningful recovery.

It is inconceivable that the framers of this rule intended this result. These individuals were not defrauding the government or involved in misappropriation of funds or criminal behavior deserving of this type of action. These were people suffering from a well documented illness in a position to misuse their professional roles to acquire drugs for their personal use. It is therefore a fait accompli that they were in a position to either take the drugs from employers or write prescriptions for the appropriation of these drugs.

When there is an intervention, a gating step to recovery is to advise the individual to make a complete admission of drug acquisition activities. This information is then shared with the investigating state agency and, apparently through the attorney generals' representative on the board, referred to the local prosecutor's office for criminal charges. Most often the person is offered treatment in lieu of prosecution and the promise that the conviction will be expunged if the recovery contract is rigorously followed.

The hardship being visited on these individual lives is bad enough but the effect on the recovering community and those destined to being members of that community is appalling. How can we convince a young physician, nurse or pharmacist to "come clean" when the information can be used to ruin their professional lives with economic complications that may continue for another 7 years? It is purely punitive with no recognizable benefit.

Finally, I must point out that the health care professional who undergoes treatment, served a several year suspension and is being monitored carefully for any mood altering drug use is not a threat to the community. In fact, the personal and professional lives of these recovering people are a "firewall" against the advance of illicit drug use and chemical dependency. They are no longer part of the problem, but rather, are part of the solution.

A call to action.

Since November 2005, IPRN has distributed, through email, a monthly newsletter. The newsletter has had a positive effect on client participation and on making information available.

IPRN

Providing direction as a confidential resource

Providing support through caring volunteers

Providing education about impairment

Please feel free to call IPRN if you need assistance, need information or need help with an intervention.

We can help!

Pharmacists Excluded

Since these letters were written there have been many positive discussions and developments. APhA has become involved and state recovery programs have been in contact. Discussions are planned between APhA, state programs and OIG. Discussions by PRN members can be found at the yahoo group PRNHELP. Current information and updates can also be found on the www.USAPRN.ORG website. Hopefully we will carry a candle for other professions to follow.

The following is a breakdown of the exclusions and how they are affecting pharmacy professionals.

<i>Exclusion</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Total Exclusions</i>	<i>Pharmacists Excluded</i>	<i>Percent</i>
1128 (a) 1	Program-related Conviction	9288	460	4.95%
1128 (a) 2	Patient Abuse/Neglect Conviction	4095	1	0.02%
1128 (a) 3	Felony Health Care Fraud Conviction	957	83	8.67%
1128 (a) 4	Felony Controlled Substance Conviction	1057	95	8.99%
1128 (b) 1	Conviction relating to Program or Health Care Fraud	545	47	8.62%
1128 (b) 2	Obstruction of an investigation conviction	30	0	0.00%
1128 (b) 3	Misdemeanor controlled substance conviction	295	72	24.41%
1128 (b) 4	License Revocation Suspension Surrender	16497	361	2.10%
1128 (b) 5	Federal/state health care program exclusion/suspension	435	19	4.37%
1128 (b) 6	Quality of Care violation	74	0	0.00%
1128 (b) 7	Fraud/kickbacks	360	3	0.83%
1128 (b) 8	Entity owned/controlled by excluded/convicted individual	1214	0	0.00%
1128 (b) 11	Failure to provide payment information	11	0	0.00%
1128 (b) 12	Failure to provide immediate access	1	0	0.00%
1128 (b) 14	Default on health education loan or scholarship obligation	2362	29	1.23%
1128 (b) 15	Individual controlling excluded/convicted entity	20	0	0.00%
1128 Aa	Imposition of a civil money penalty or assessment	157	2	1.27%
1156 (b)	Peer review organization referral	68	0	0.00%
TOTALS		37466	1172	3.13%

For information and assistance in the state of Iowa:
Jeffrey C. Reist RPh FASCP - jeffrey-reist@uiowa.edu
or IPRN 1-877-890-4776.

Volunteer to make a difference today.

A.A. Survey Shows Key Role of Health Caregivers

March 1, 2006 – Press Release

Results of the newest Membership Survey of Alcoholics Anonymous confirm growing trust and transparency in the relationships between alcoholics and their health caregivers – doctors, nurses, counselors and others – who, in turn, appear to be more informed about A.A. Seventy-seven percent of members' doctors know they are in A.A., and 39% of members said they had been referred to A.A. by a health care professional. Sixty-four percent said they had received some type of treatment or counseling before coming to A.A., and, of these, 74% said it had played an important part in directing them to Alcoholics Anonymous.

Information

October 6,7, & 8, 2006- 15th Annual Heartland PRN Conference

**Doubletree Guest Suites Hotel
Doubletree Conference Center
2111 Butterfield Road
Downers Grove, Illinois**

**Sponsored by the Illinois Pharmacy Foundation and
Rush Behavioral Health Center**

Contact person : Wally Cross 312 563 3602

Email : Wallace J Cross@Rush.edu

IPRN is planning our annual fall meeting. Tentatively set for October 19th in Des Moines. Let me know if this date works for you. The meeting will include advocate training, general sessions and a closed client review. We are planning a banquet and social to celebrate 25 years of assisting pharmacy professionals in Iowa. We hope to honor our volunteers who have given back to our profession through the PAPI (Pharmacists Aiding Pharmacists in Iowa) and IPRN (The Iowa Pharmacy Recovery Network) for the past 25 years. If you know of a volunteer that you would like to see honored please let me know.

Contact IPRN at:

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Alcoholics Anonymous can be found online at www.aa.org.

“This morning I looked in the mirror and made a choice, a small positive change, to smile instead of frown.”

Kayla Hatt

If you know anyone who would like to receive this newsletter just email and we will add them to the mailing list. Otherwise, feel free to pass the news along.

Also, if you wish to be removed from the email list, please let me know. Thanks!