Challenges to treating drug addiction in our Homeless

By Linda Carr-Lee Faix

On October 23rd, The Division of Medical Ethics and Humanities joined the Utah Poison Control Center, College of Pharmacy, the Eccles Health Sciences Library, and the Office of Health Equity and Inclusion, to sponsor a panel of experts to discuss the neuroscience of addictions, the effects on vulnerable populations, and policy implications. The National Library of Medicine exhibit, “Pick Your Poison,” on display through the end of October at the Eccles Library, prompted this event. Leslie Francis, PhD, JD, moderated the panel.

Kristen Keefe, PhD, Professor of Pharmacology/Toxicology, College of Pharmacy began by distinguishing between addiction and abuse. In order to successfully treat addiction, it is important to recognize that addiction is a disease, with changes in the brain’s neuro-circuitry. Addiction is NOT due to a shortage of willpower, but is more like the physical trembling a person with Parkinson’s disease suffers—neither are within willpower’s purview. By discovering what’s fundamentally changed in the brain’s circuitry we can design treatments to reverse disease. The good news is that addiction treatments work. The sad thing is that too many miss this critical understanding and say hurtful, misguided, simplistic things like, “If you loved us enough, you’d change.”

Abuse arises with decision-making. We all make decisions, good and bad, and often, due to a variety of circumstances, underlying behavioral problems influence and feed addictions. Glen Hanson, PhD, Associate Dean, School of Dentistry, Director, Utah Addiction Center, emphasized that there is no “magic pill” for treatment—that both the medical “disease” side and the decision-making “abuse” side should be used strategically in an informed approach to drug addiction that would include: 1) prevention—how to predict risk, 2) treatment, 3) policy—what are the most effective and powerful ways to deal with addictions? Nationally, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) has shifted away from a “shock and awe” criminal justice focus toward one based on the neurobiology of addiction. Statewide, Dr. Hansen recounted a poignant story of a similar Utah shift that occurred a few years ago. Jon Huntsman, as Governor, visited Odyssey House to learn about methamphetamine addiction and mental health treatment. With the knowledge that meth addicts, rather than being criminals to cringe from, resembled sisters, children, spouses, and daughters, attitudes and approaches to solutions changed to become more hopeful, medical strategies.

But lest our joy over the paradigm shift to an effective, workable, and thorough approach to drug addiction causes us to overlook important details, Janida Emerson, Chief Operating Officer, Fourth Street Clinic, educated us about challenges faced by our most vulnerable, the homeless, here in Utah. 25% of the 5000 unique patients at 4th Street Clinic received mental health and substance abuse treatment last year. She divided their challenges into four interrelated types of challenges that still need to be addressed: 1) access to treatment, 2) expectations around treatment, 3) stigma, 4) recovery and support.

Access to treatment is fraught with tremendous gaps, particularly around transitions in types of care. For examples, there is a 3 to 12 month wait between getting detox and getting into treatment and a 12-16 month wait for residential treatment care.

Expectations of treatment as a “once and done” can create tremendous pressure on often fragile individuals that can trigger relapses. Addicts, especially the homeless, have complex histories and it is unrealistic to think that one size treatment fits all. The syringe exchange program is a tool for progressive engagement.

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Stigma is pervasive, interferes with access, and is perhaps the biggest challenge. Although we have an effective medical model for addiction treatment, the funding for that treatment remains triggered by the criminal justice system. Operation Rio Grande rounded up the homeless in Salt Lake City and arrested them so that they could get treatment. But once treated through the criminal justice system, these people, due to being convicted of a drug offense, no longer qualify for federally subsidized housing. Thus, a vicious loop with homelessness persists.

Janida Emerson emphasized that until we stop seeing addiction and homelessness as something that “would never happen to me,” stigma will prevail. From talking with homeless individuals, the biggest contributor to becoming homeless is the lack of a support network. For recovery, we must have adequate mental health treatment—but more broadly, support to help live a meaningful life is essential to recovery—for what is life if I only have poverty and homelessness to return to?

Patrick Fleming, Retired Director, Salt Lake County Behavioral Health, and Member, Fourth Street QI Committee, stressed that fighting the “moral failure” view to addiction and homelessness is key to destigmatization. He explained that the coverage system for addiction treatment in Utah rests with the counties. Before the Affordable Care Act (ACA)—which made mental health an essential benefit, people ended up in the ER. He made an economic argument for retaining the ACA and for expanding Medicaid, saying that the money spent on Operation Rio Grande would be enough money for that expansion. Since we end up paying through taxes and charity, anyway, why not try for a system that helps to destigmatize and reduce access gaps?

Evening Ethics

Monday, November 6, 2017  5:30pm-7:00 pm
Research Administration Building #117

“Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers (TRAP): ethical issues”

Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers, or TRAP laws, have been proliferating in many states. These laws impose special requirements on abortion providers: requirements of informed consent, equipment, inspections, fetal protection, and even procedures. In 2016, the U.S. Supreme Court held in Whole Women’s Health v. Hellerstedt that TRAP laws are unconstitutional if they impose unreasonable burdens on women’s health without offsetting benefits supported by evidence.

Please join us for an Evening Ethics discussion that will include such questions as: How do these TRAP laws implicate professional standards of care? How do these TRAP laws implicate the profession's ethical obligations (such as to "do no harm" and promote patient autonomy?) Who speaks for the profession on these issues? What if members of the profession disagree? How does a physician separate out their personal/philosophical views from those of the profession?


Contact linda.carrlee@hsc.utah.edu for copies.

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For those interested in this topic in more detail, a symposium sponsored by the University of Utah S.J. Quinney College of Law Center for Law & Biomedical Sciences on the “Medical and Legal Aspects of Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers (TRAP) Laws,” will be held on December 1 @ 8:30 am - 4:00 pm at the S.J. Quinney College of Law.

For more information and registration for that symposium, see http://www.law.utah.edu/event/medical-and-legal-aspects-of-targeted-regulation-of-abortion-providers-trap-laws/
Our 2017-18 Sara and Max Cowan Memorial Lecturer in Humanistic Medicine is Abraham M. Nussbaum, MD. Dr. Nussbaum is an Associate Professor, Department of Psychiatry, University of Colorado School of Medicine, and a board certified psychiatrist who practices at Denver Health, an academic safety-net hospital in downtown Denver. He previously directed its adult inpatient psychiatry units, which care for adults throughout Colorado experiencing mental health crises and currently serves as Chief Education Officer, providing strategic vision, daily direction, and administrative oversight for Denver Health’s clinical education programs. In his practice, he strives to inhabit the roles described in his book, *The Finest Traditions of My Calling: One Physician’s Search for the Renewal of Medicine*, asking how he and his fellow practitioners can restore patients to health through person-centered care. Dr. Nussbaum is actively involved in teaching undergraduate students, medical students, psychiatry residents, and psychosomatic fellows.

**There will be three opportunities to see Dr. Nussbaum.** (See descriptions, below.) We hope that you can join us for any or all of them:

- **Evening Ethics: “Professional Conscripts: Rethinking Conscience in Medicine”** Wednesday, November 15, 5:30pm-7:00pm, Research Administration Building, 1st floor large conference room (Rm #117)

  Recently, the question of conscientious objection was prominently raised in an NEJM article by Ronit Y. Stahl, Ph.D., and Ezekiel J. Emanuel, M.D., Ph.D. Using this article, “Physicians, Not Conscripts—Conscientious Objection in Health Care” (NEJM, 2017 Apr 6;376(14):1380-1385) to frame our conversation, we will consider the similarities and differences between conscientious objection in the military and in medicine; ask if it should be legal for a health practitioner to opt out of performing specific procedures because of his or her moral or religious beliefs; if and when a practitioner should not participate in a particular practice endorsed by a professional society; consider if professional societies constitute a moral authority; explore the difference between individual and communal conscience; and think through other ways to honor pluralism within contemporary health professions. (Contact Linda.carrlee@hsc.utah.edu for a copy of this article.)

- **Internal Medicine Grand Rounds: Cowan Memorial Lecture: "Questionable Agreement: The Inter-Rater Reliability of Major Depressive Disorder and its Implications for Quality Improvement“** Thursday, November 16, 7:45am-9:00am, HSEB 1750

- **Cowan Memorial Public Lecture: “Mistaking The Map for The Territory: How We Got Lost In the Patient-Practitioner Relationship”, noon-1:00pm, HSEB 1730, boxed lunches provided**

  We are again debating healthcare reform. Who should be insured? Who should pay? It’s time to discuss not just the reform of the healthcare industry, but the renewal of the

The HSEB Bookstore will have copies of Dr. Nussbaum’s book, *The Finest Traditions of My Calling: One Physician’s Search for the Renewal of Medicine*, to purchase after Grand Rounds, and before and after the Cowan noon Lecture. Dr. Nussbaum will sign copies after Grand Rounds and after the Cowan noon Lecture.
Becoming Nicole by Emily Ellis Nutt

Wayne and Kelly Maines adopted identical twin boys and named them Wyatt and Jonas, but from the very beginning, it was clear to everyone that one of the twins was markedly different from the other. Almost as soon as he could talk, Wyatt was insisting he was a girl stuck in the body of a boy. Becoming Nicole: The Transformation of an American Family is a moving account of a transgender girl’s coming of age and her conservative, blue collar family’s struggle to first accept her identity and then champion it in a landmark court case. Pulitzer Prize-winning author, Amy Ellis Nutt takes readers inside the lives of each of these remarkable people.

The Door by Magda Szabo

Magda Szabo’s novel The Door is set in post-war Hungary. Szabo published the novel in 1987, and she died at 90 in 2007. The central relationship in this autobiographical novel is between a successful writer (the narrator) and her housekeeper, Emerence. The two women have a complicated life together over a period of twenty years. We might expect that much attention would be paid to the Soviet-bloc communism of the period, but more relevant contexts are Eastern-European Christianity, which the narrator embraces and Emerence rejects, and ancient Greek epic and myth, which influence the narrator’s perceptions in general and her specific attempts to understand Emerence. Medicine enters the story: in the latter part of the novel Emerence is hospitalized, and the doctors and those who know her attempt to deal with the difficult issues she raises as a patient. One is her right to choose death, which she fiercely maintains, and this issue leads to an estrangement between her and the narrator. These two women characters are very different but somehow deeply bonded, and the novel explores the many contrasts they represent, including the folkloric past with modern consciousness and a mythic (even heroic) sensibility with everyday domesticity and practical civic-mindedness. The narrator asserts that the bond she has with Emerence is one of love, and the novel is a sustained exploration of authenticity in human relationships both “official” and personal.

Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis by J.D. Vance

In his poignant memoir, Hillbilly Elegy, J.D. Vance offers insights into America’s white working class culture-in-crisis from one who grew up in a poor Rust Belt town. Vance chronicles his family’s story from postwar American poverty in Kentucky to hopeful escape in middle class Ohio, his narration replete with a legacy of abuse, alcoholism, poverty, and trauma. Vance, now a former marine and Yale Law School graduate, explains how upward mobility feels for him today, how effects of his family history persist for him, everyday. By sharing his story, he tries to shed light on a demographic in our country that struggle with the loss of the American dream.

The 2018 Schedule of Readings is posted on our website at: http://medicine.utah.edu/internalmedicine/medicalethics/
Genetics Hot Topics

“Gene Drive: Scientists Can Now Use Genetics to Alter Ecosystems. Should They?”

December 5, 2017 5:30pm-7:00pm, RAB 1st floor Conference Room

Current gene-editing technologies (like CRISPR-Cas9) now have the potential to alter populations, species, and even entire ecosystems. A genetic alteration inserted into a small population of organisms released into the wild would allow for that altered genetic variant to spread through an entire population as those original organisms reproduce and pass on the variant. Scientists have proposed using the technology—called “gene drive”—to alter organisms and the environment. For example, a gene drive involving mosquitoes could limit the insects’ ability to transmit deadly diseases like malaria, dengue, and Zika. Gene drives have also been proposed to fight invasive species that decimate island ecosystems. The gene drive technology, however, will itself alter the ecosystems. How should this technology be regulated? Can it be safely researched? Are there ways to anticipate the long term impact of altering whole populations? Might the technology be weaponized and, if so, how can that be prevented? This Genetics Hot Topics will be devoted to assessing who should be in the driver’s seat when it comes to gene drive. Background readings for this session:

2018 David Green Memorial Speaker, Douglas S. Diekema MD, MPH
Professor of Pediatrics, University of Washington School of Medicine Director of Education, Treuman Katz Center for Pediatric Bioethics, Seattle Children’s Research Institute

- Evening Ethics, Wednesday, January 31, 2018, 1st fl. Conf. room, Research Administration Building: Title tbd
- Pediatric Grand Rounds, February 1, 2018, 3r fl. Auditorium, Primary Children’s Hospital, 8am: “When Parents and Providers Disagree: Understanding and Responding to Conflicts in the Care of Children”

DMEH Calendar of Activities and Programs

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<td>Leaving Against Medical Advice (role play)</td>
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<td>VAMC Tsagaris Conference room: Gretchen Case, PhD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed. Dec. 13</td>
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DIVISION MEMBERS ON THE ROAD AND IN PRINT

Leslie Francis spoke on privacy, big data, and information in patient registries at the conference on “All Data is Health Data: The Impact of Data and Data Laws in Clinical Care, Innovation, and Research” at the Hall Center for Law and Health at the Indiana University R.H. McKinney School of Law, October 20, 2017.

Leslie Francis and Anita Silvers gave a keynote address at the Tennessee Value and Agency Conference on Philosophy of Disability: Perspectives, Challenges, and Aspirations, on Oct 27, 2017. The title of their address was “Defining Disability and Respecting Rights: Reasonable Accommodation must be Meaningful—but for Whom?” “Reading Alexander V. Choate Rightly: Now is the Time” by Leslie Francis and Anita Silvers, (Laws 2017, 6, 17) is available online. At http://www.mdpi.com/2075-471X/6/4/17/pdf

Leslie Francis’s October 2017 revision in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy on “Feminist Philosophy of Law” is now available online at https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-law/

Peggy Battin is profiled in Esping, A. Epistemology, ethics, and meaning in unusually personal scholarship. New York: Palgrave. (in press)

Peggy Battin was a panelist, “Psychedelic Medicine: New Frontiers in Palliative Care,” University of Washington School of Law, Seattle, October 27, 2017.

Jim Ruble presented “Communication and Conflict Resolution Skills for Pharmacy Professionals” at University of Utah Hospital this October.

Susan Sample presented "Palliative Care and Ethics" to the Community Nursing Services Ethics Committee in Salt Lake City Aug. 29