

Case Histories: The Impact of the Detoxification Program

Presenters

Clark Carr
Bob Alexander
Kelly Piper

Moderator

W. Kent McGregor, A.C.S.W.

During planning for the conference, frequent requests were made for the presentation of first-hand accounts of the use of detoxification to treat drug abuse.

Following presentations which outlined the rationale for integrating detoxification in the drug rehabilitation process, this panel reviewed a number of specific case histories. Two former hard core drug users joined the panel to discuss the impact of detoxification on their addiction problems.

Clark Carr, representing the Narconon program, explained that in drug rehabilitation, the nature of the materials being mobilized into the bloodstream is such that an individual may re-experience the physical and emotional sensations associated with drug use. Addicts not only experience “highs” (as well as “flashbacks”) during detoxification, but also manifest what has been termed a “drug personality.”

Such phenomena, Mr. Carr stated, are often directly associated with increases in niacin. When physical or mental reactions occur, the correct action is to continue the person on the program following the standard protocol, knowing that the symptoms will diminish as the program is continued. He explained that these seeming “reactions” are in fact reactivation, or “restimulation,” of thoughts and physical phenomena experienced while under the influence of drugs.

Mr. Carr described examples of restimulation which he had encountered in a decade of work with addicts, from rashes and the re-appearance of old needle marks to paranoia and delusions. To further illustrate the variety and transitory nature of these manifestations, he presented examples drawn from

representative case histories.

Case History 1

The client had a drug history which included heroin, methadone in large doses daily and psychiatric drugs.

On the ninth day in the sauna, the client reported that he experienced a “buzz,” as if under the influence of heroin. Reported that he felt “annoyed.” Two days later, he reported stomach problems, puffy eyes, difficulty sleeping—all symptoms of heroin withdrawal. This is noteworthy, as the client had completed withdrawal from the drug prior to beginning detoxification.

On the 12th day on the program, the client was ill. Again, he reported that he “felt high like on heroin.” The next day, these manifestations had abated, and he reported feeling better. Improvement continued on day 14, and the client reported his sleep was improved and he felt like his “normal self.”

Again on day 17, there was an apparent mobilization of additional stored residues. The client reported that he had a “heroin buzz,” accompanied by “murderous thoughts.” This continued on the next day, with the client feeling “anxious and irritated,” also noting that his “sweat smells like a hospital.”

On day 19, the client reported the reappearance of hypodermic marks from past drug injections on his arm, “purplish” in color. Again, he experienced a heroin “buzz,” this time for 15-20 minutes.

The regimen was continued, with the appearance and dimunition of similar manifestations. After 52 days, the client completed detoxification and has since remained drug free.

Case History 2

Next, Mr. Carr related the case of a client who had abused a large variety of drugs. Prior to rehabilitation, she was smoking marijuana daily and had begun using heroin.



Narconon's Chilocco, Oklahoma center sits on 167 acres of Native American land. Run in cooperation with leaders of five local tribes, the facility works to address the addiction problems that trouble Native American communities. At the conference Gary Smith, Executive Director of Narconon Chilocco (left), met with Joe Jojolla, past Director of the All Indian Pueblo Council's Two Worlds Alcoholism Project and accreditation specialist W. Kent McGregor.

“With crack cocaine, one hit is too many and a thousand are never enough. My friends who had been to various other programs had managed to stay clean while they were there. But the issues that weren’t really addressed for them were why they did drugs in the first place, and the problem of drug cravings.”

—Kelly Piper,

Former Addict, Narconon

graduate

On her first day on the program, the client developed a facial rash and experienced drug-induced hallucinations. On the third day, she reported feeling as if she was high on the designer drug, “Ecstasy.” Similar drug reactions continued on the fourth day.

On the eighth day, the client reported that she was unable to sweat in the sauna. She reported that she was “very angry,” and felt that “everything was fine when it wasn’t,” emotions which she associated with the drug Prozac. The next day, the client reported feeling paranoid. For example, when she left the sauna for cooldown periods, she had the impression that the other clients in the sauna were talking about her. While in the sauna, she said she “saw strange patterns in the floor.”

This client remained on the program for 56 days, with a continual lessening of drug-related manifestations. She completed the program and remains off drugs.

Personal Accounts of Former Addicts

Kelly Piper

Ms. Piper stated that she began using drugs at age 14. By age 15, she was smoking marijuana every day. She then began to use cocaine, LSD and other drugs. To some extent, she “got away with it” because she continued to do well in school. After high school, she began college studies at UC Berkeley. Her parents died while she was at school and she was obligated to return to Los Angeles. At this time, she became addicted to crack cocaine.

She did crack daily for four years, and was “unable to get out of bed” without it. She became pregnant twice and had two drug-induced miscarriages, nearly dying from complications of a hemorrhage. Eventually, she was arrested and given a choice of treatment or a jail sentence. She was again pregnant at that time.

She chose the Narconon program because it was “the only one her friends hadn’t tried.” She had observed that they still craved cocaine after rehabilitation and eventually resumed use of the drug.

Prior to detoxification she experienced “overwhelming” cravings for crack. She completed the program after 46 days (in 1993). She completed the other components of the Narconon program while

pregnant, and underwent detoxification after giving birth. She is drug-free today and the mother of a bright, active child.

Bob Alexander

Now 53 years old, Mr. Alexander said that he began using alcohol at the age of four. It was given to him by an aunt and uncle who found it amusing to see him drunk. He began drinking on his own at age seven and became a life-long alcoholic. As he grew older, he also abused codeine (which he purchased over-the-counter) and later used marijuana and speed and abused prescription drugs.

Eventually, Mr. Alexander was sent to prison for assault. In prison, he successfully completed the Alcoholics Anonymous program. After release he eventually went back to abusing alcohol. Some years later he suffered a serious injury to his foot. During treatment, he became addicted to synthetic heroin. This continued for seven years, until his physicians would no longer prescribe the drug.

He turned to the streets, and was a heroin addict for 17 years. During this time he went through 11 different rehab programs, each time relapsing after completion. After completing detoxification, he was free of drug cravings. Today, for the first time in more than 40 years, he is drug free.