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What Heroin Reveals

For many people in the Northern Kentucky community, heroin is a lens that reveals society's weaknesses. For those of us in the medical community, heroin is more like a mirror. It reflects our failure of leadership. Physicians and surgeons are the answer to many of society's problems. We must become the solution to heroin. We have allowed the community we care for to become infected with addiction and subject to early death. The time has come for physicians and surgeons to step up and take charge.

In this brief article, I will discuss evidence-based treatment for opiate addiction, and the elements of social support for people moving past drug use. Then I will reflect a bit upon the meaning of medical leadership. The best way for us to help our patients is to work with their families and with other stakeholders within the community.

Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) is the cornerstone to addressing heroin addiction within the population. Each individual who is using heroin should be identified and assessed by a multidisciplinary team. A treatment plan should be developed. The patient should be stabilized

with one of the approved medications: Methadone, Suboxone, intramuscular injection for naltrexone (Vivitrol), or oral naltrexone. In general, those who have very strong addiction, and those with chronic pain, should be on methadone. Patients with intermediate disease should be placed on Suboxone or Vivitrol. Each family and patient needs to have Naloxone, for overdose. Most patients will also need care for comorbid issues including chronic pain, mental illness, Hepatitis C etc. We have started to address needle exchange, but it needs rapid development and expansion.

MAT can stabilize the population. It brings patients to a point of safety, where they can begin to heal their lives. To achieve this, we need Kentucky Medicaid to cover Methadone. We need more doctors to prescribe Suboxone. We need detox centers to get patients on Vivitrol. We need safe locations to stabilize those individuals who are very ill.

Social support is the next step. All patients will need social support, including ther-

apy, and both traditional and non-traditional AA and NA equivalents. Their families need support because most have had everything disrupted. At least half of the individuals will need help with jobs, housing and transportation. The judicial system needs to move away from being so punitive, because jail is traumatic and nearly always makes things worse. We should seriously consider decriminalizing the use of marijuana. Most heroin addicts, even when they stop using heroin, use marijuana. We have to come to terms with the fact that people with addiction have pain and anxiety.

Now I will explain why physicians and surgeons need to assume the responsibility of becoming community leaders. Just becoming a doctor separates us from the general population. Our training teaches us how to combine the scientific method with an orientation toward service.

Most issues impacting our community can be seen as an extension of our patient's needs.

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NKMS Alliance Report

Kentucky had a great AMA Alliance and AMA meeting in Chicago. KPPAC Chair, Kim Moser, was awarded the prestigious AMPAC Belle Chenault Award (given every 2 years and very competitive). Dr. Steve Stack (Lexington ER Doc) was sworn in as the new AMA President. Dr. Stack will be attending the annual KMA meeting in August 28-31, 2015 in Louisville. He will be doing a Town Hall Meeting. Please check out the schedule at kyma.org. Pat Padgett was named as Chair of the AMA Litigation Center and Dr. Tom Bunnell lead the KMA Alliance attendees. Many NKY physicians and spouses were in attendance to celebrate.



KMA Alliance was also chosen to be a Pilot Program using joint membership billing. New membership billing information will be coming soon in the mail.

Please join the KMA Alliance meeting August 28-30 at the Hyatt Downtown in Louisville as Dr. Tom Bunnell celebrates his year as President and installs Patty Pellegrini (Lex) as the new KMA Alliance President. AMA Alliance Social Media Chair, Debbi Ricks, (CA) will be doing a wonderful Social Networking Workshop on August 29. Watch your emails for further information about the meeting. Hope to see you there!



Nancy Swikert, MD, President, NKMSA

Meet Your Legislators Dinner

The Meet your Legislators dinner will be held at Summit Hills Country Club, (236 Dudley Road, Crestview Hills, KY) on Thursday, October 1, 2015. The evening will begin with a cash bar at 6:30 PM and dinner will be served at 7:00 PM.

Dinner is complimentary for NKMS physician members and their spouse/guest. Dinner for non-member physicians and their spouse/guest is \$50 per person.

Dinner is sponsored by the Northern Kentucky Medical Society.

Invitations will be mailed in September. Make plans to attend this year's Meet Your Legislators dinner.

Please RSVP on or before September 25, 2015 to the Northern Kentucky Medical Society, Karla Kennedy, at (859) 496-6567 or via email to nkms@nkms.org.



**Northern Kentucky
Medical Society**

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**Northern Kentucky's
Physician Network**

Address Correction Requested

President's Report

What Can I Do? Part VII

Start Your Own PAC

"All politics is local." [Thomas P. O'Neill](#)

There are many advantages to having your own political action committee (PAC) for your medical group. Contributions to an internal PAC can be done with the potent fundraising tool of payroll deduction. Labor unions have been doing this for years, garnering tremendous political power. Why can't we? It makes political contributions easy for busy physicians. Physicians also have a sense of loyalty for their PAC and feel they have a strong say in how the money is used.

There is a one page application (see below) to start a state level PAC. A president and a treasurer must be chosen. One strategy is to choose the business manager of the medical group as treasurer. Quarterly reports are filed thereafter. Contributions, limited to \$1500/person/year, must be voluntary.

This is a way to increase physician involvement in the political process, to elect more physician-friendly legislators, and to achieve long-sought political goals for medicine such as tort reform. The group to which I belong has its own PAC. We have helped elect candidates whose views are favorable toward medicine. We have also contributed from our PAC to KPPAC (\$1000 limit/year). In my opinion, the more medical groups that follow suit, the more political clout we will have in Frankfort for the good of our profession and our patients.

For more information please go to: <http://kref.ky.gov/Pages/Forms.aspx>.



Eric Neils, MD, President, NKMS