

Hear it from Dr Rod



Medical advances in addiction treatment

By Raul J. Rodriguez MD, DABPN, DABAM, MRO

"28 days" is what most people think of when addiction treatment is mentioned. This actually was the case for so many years, even though the success rates were very low.

Most people are unaware that the 28-day model was based on insurance reimbursement limits and not on any actual science. This is part of why success rates were so low. Modern medical science has now entered the addiction arena full force and has drastically changed both the quality and accessibility of addiction treatment.

The mechanisms of addiction have a very strong biologic and physiologic basis, in addition to the psychological and spiritual components. It makes perfect sense then that the right kinds of medical interventions could have a strong positive impact on sobriety. These types of treatments, especially when coupled with psychological treatment, could yield never before seen success rates. These interventions have actually already been developed and have become the new standards of care in addiction treatment.

A treatment modality really needs to work if it is to receive a medical indication by the FDA, even more so if it is

to become the standard of care. Subutex and Suboxone, for the treatment of opiate or "pain pill" addiction, have emerged as the new standard of care with unparalleled success rates. These medications have revolutionized addiction treatment, creating a major shift from the old "28 day" inpatient care model to an outpatient model. Patients no longer have to go "away to rehab" and can actually detox while still working and caring for their families. These medications neutralize much of the exaggerated biological drive to use opiates, resulting in a drastic reduction in cravings. Some receive Subutex just for detoxification. Others benefit from a daily dose or "maintenance" with Suboxone, which profoundly suppresses opiate cravings and would actually interfere with any opiates consumed in a relapse. These daily doses have a stabilizing effect and are in no way intoxicating when taken correctly.

Patients that are properly treated with these medications are usually perfectly alert, energetic and feel gen-

erally good. They do not get or look "high" while taking this medication, remaining fully functional. The leveling of the playing field created by these medications gives individuals a fair chance at working on their sobriety without the burden of obsessive cravings. A person taking Subutex or Suboxone appropriately, as prescribed by a qualified physician, is considered to be fully "clean and sober". Relapse rates have fallen drastically when these medical treatments are combined with psychological treatments, greatly improving the prognosis for motivated and compliant patients.

Strong motivation and treatment compliance are essential for successful treatment of any type. Knowledge of available treatment options is equally as important. Anyone who seeks treatment needs to be informed and not limit his or her options

due to ignorance or fear of something new. Do your own research and speak to qualified professionals. Do not rely on forceful yet unqualified opinions.

Make your own decision based on the preponderance of information you find.

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