

Garden City Osteopathic is example

Alcohol related hospital visits are costly ventures

By Leonard Poger
staff writer

A 45-year-old man with a drinking problem ran up a health insurance bill of \$57,000 in one year.

interview on the economic impact of alcohol problems on the economy was Frank MacDonell, director of a suburban alcohol therapy center.

His firm, Phoenix Alcoholism Therapy Services Inc., is housed in Garden City Osteopathic Hospital, where it serves patients there and in St. Mary Hospital, Livonia.

lems," of which nearly all are alcohol-related, MacDonell said.

Those domestic calls are usually reported on Friday nights, "big drinking nights," he added. The impact of alcoholism is also a substantial cost for higher health and hospital costs.

Fetal alcohol syndrome

Booze affects unborn baby

By Marilyn Fitchett
staff writer

While a woman is eating for two, should she be drinking for either?

No, says the National Council on Alcoholism - Greater Detroit Area chapter, which warns that as little as one ounce of pure alcohol per day consumed by a pregnant woman could have damaging effects on her unborn child.

of alcoholism and stressing to the professionals that what they do for an alcoholic may make a difference in the alcoholic's life.

There are other problems with workers who drink heavily:

"When there is a troubled employee, it is a topic of discussion between the company and a union committeeman and usually several meetings are held," MacDonell said.

CHARACTERISTICS of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome reported by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism include: low birth weight and a continuous failure to thrive; smaller head and brain size with subsequently low intelligence; developmental delay or mental deficiency; fine motor dysfunction; eye and facial abnormalities; cleft palate; congenital limb malformations; abnormalities of the external genitalia; mental retardation; and signs of central nervous system impairment.

IS THE PUBLIC receptive to claim of damage to unborn children caused by drinking?

"We're based on reality. We have the studies to back us up," she said. "FAS has become a popular topic. People are aware of it."

The worker absent because of a drinking problem disrupts the entire production process.

"The absent employee is paid anyway, the utility person who replaces him is paid, production is affected, reports are written, and there are several meetings concerning the absent worker between the company and union."

Occasionally won't hurt, says Dr. Anthony Boutt, obstetrician/gynecologist on the staff at Providence Hospital. He defines "occasionally" as one drink once or twice a month.

"But you can't make people change. A lot of a person's beliefs about drinking depend on their upbringing, the way they were raised. The best we can do is educate people about alcohol."

That cost is passed along by the company to the consumer in the price of the cars, stressed MacDonell.

Recent medical findings indicate a direct relationship between prenatal alcohol consumption and the occurrence of a series of birth defects known as Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. FAS is listed as one of the three leading causes of birth defects, along with Down's Syndrome and spina bifida. Of these, only FAS offers the possibility for prevention.

Ms. Ruboyanes pointed to a high rate of miscarriages for drinking women.

"MANY FAS KIDS don't make it to birth, and 3 percent of all live births are FAS babies."

THE DIRECTOR stressed there are other financial tremors caused by alcoholism, which the rest of the country pays for.

The public pays taxes to support police officers to answer "domestic prob-

"There's no question that a significant percentage of unborn children are affected who have mothers who abuse alcohol," Boutt said. "But occasional use, limiting yourself to one drink per social occasion per month probably doesn't hurt."

In an effort to spread the word about FAS, the local chapter of the National Council on Alcoholism is conducting 2½ hours of training for persons in the fields of medicine, social work and education.

"When an assembly line worker doesn't show up for work, a utility employee is assigned to his work and the company winds up paying twice -

"There are very few things we can do to limit birth defects," Boutt said. "Rubella is one, and we are very careful about it. This possibility is another area where a woman can do something."

"We're trying to reach people who are working with women of child-bearing age," she said.

The program includes information about FAS, debunking common myths

lems," of which nearly all are alcohol-related, MacDonell said.

"Sometimes a doctor just doesn't want to bring up the alcohol factor because if he does then he has to deal with the denial by the parents. That's part of the stigma of alcoholism. It's a disease of denial."

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Boutt cautioned against panicking women who drank, unaware that they

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