

# Alcoholics get humane treatment



By HOWARD RONTAL

Several therapists on the staff of the Providence Hospital Substance Abuse Program have kicked their own alcohol or drug addiction, said the program's new director, Clifford Furgison, a resident of Farmington Hills. But they never tell their patients.

The patient can say, "How do you know what it's like if you weren't an addict?" The patient can say, "How can you help since you're as sick as me?" Either way the patient has shifted attention from himself and his addiction to the

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—Clifford Furgison

therapist and found a way to block the road to his own recovery.

Not all abusers would do this, but the fact that the program staffers must watch what they say illustrates how complex the problems of abuse and treatment are. "If we label the alcoholic, we begin to treat him as an alcoholic and not as a person. We want to treat him as a person and we find we have the best results doing it that way. We have to tailor treatment plans to meet the person's needs," said Furgison.

In order to do this, each new patient's record is reviewed by the whole staff, and an individualized approach is devised. Some people need to be confronted with their defenses early in therapy. Some people need to hang on to them until they have made some progress, said Furgison.

Although both the alcohol and the drug therapies are conducted in a "group" setting, the drug therapy has concentrated more on underlying psychological problems than the alcohol therapy, and according to Furgison, had less success.

By January of 1977, drug treatment had more alcohol treatment.

Alcohol therapy lasts 14 months. We've had a problem with a family that said "Furgison" it affects the whole family, and thus the whole family comes in with the patient.

Patients, their families, and the therapists meet twice per day for two weeks in order to get acquainted and set the immediate support which will enable them to put the cork in the bottle. It's during this time that they explore their attitudes toward therapy and recovery.

During the second six week phase patients explore their emotional attachments to drink, how they feel about themselves, and how they feel about the people who live close to them.

OUR THIRST IS the here and now, but we will take it where it leads us. If a conflict has been a pattern throughout a person's life, we try to follow it back and help them resolve it.

We hope that by this time we've begun

to integrate the cognitive and the emotional side so they have become somewhat comfortably sober," Furgison said. The last 12 months of the program help the patient and his family to develop a different life style. "The only thing worse than pathological drinking is being miserably sober. Certainly a goal of this program is to fill that void to build a meaningful existence."

We don't believe that the therapy occurs in a two hour group. It's what you do with your therapy outside, not so much what you do in this room," that counts Furgison said. "We want the responsibility for the therapy on their shoulders, not ours."

Furgison, who has been at the Providence Hospital Mental Health Clinic for two years, has a BA in education and an MA in psychology from Eastern Michigan University. He claims that the alcohol-abuser program has a 75 per cent success rate.

Success in the drug, mainly heroin, program has been harder to come by. Under the current system, an outpatient group modality is combined with a methadone treatment program.

Here in addiction usually means a person's life style. "The first thing a junkie thinks of when he gets up in the morning is how am I going to get enough money together to get my fix. The government supplied methadone, a heroin substitute gives the addict a chance to break the money fix money fix cycle that keeps him from even attempting a cure."

Furgison said drug addicts find kicking their habit harder than alcoholics because they live in a culture more removed from what is considered normal, and thus have farther to go to get back. They also seem to have their psychological development arrested more severely than the alcoholic.

HE ALSO POINTED OUT that junkies are harder on artists. During winter, when the cold weather makes money for a fix harder to get, some junkies will sign up for methadone with only had commitment. The methadone supplements their drug habit. Come spring, in the first sunny

day, they may leave us," said Furgison. Although Furgison has no accurate figures on the drug treatment program's success rate, he said it was less than that for the alcohol program.

But Furgison also blames some of the failure on the program itself. It put too much emphasis on in-depth psychological counseling which scared off some patients, and not enough emphasis on getting the patient off drugs and on the road to a more functioning life-style.

The Providence Hospital Substance Abuse program is available to all residents of Oakland, Wayne and Macomb Counties.

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**Hampton tapped for seminar**

Gregory E. Hampton, a senior at Farmington High School, has been chosen to participate in the 1978 Washington Workshops Congress, a national seminar in the nation's capital.

He lives at 2031 Nine Mile Farmington. The seminar, organized by the Washington Workshops Foundation, a non-profit, nonpartisan association, founded in 1967.

Now in its 18th annual series, the seminar has been attended by thousands of students since its inception.

The services, conducted in cooperation with Maryland College, offer an intensive study of American government for selected high school students from across the nation.

Hampton will travel daily to Capitol Hill where he, along with the other students will confer with government leaders. The students will receive commentary on the operation of the government and, in turn, submit their questions and comments concerning government activities.

Hampton also will spend time observing the workings of the national government as he attends sessions of the House and Senate, as well as committee hearings and meet individually with his senators and congressmen.

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**Pheasant sale**

Special \$10 permits are still on sale for the last five weeks of the pheasant program, from Dec. 1 through Jan. 2, notes Vic Janson, the DNR's south-central Michigan game bird specialist. He says about 20,000 pheasants are scheduled for release at 20 state game and recreation areas in southern Lower Michigan at three times a week intervals during this period.

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