

A Thai Experience

Written by Leana M. Gadbois-Sills

As my first overseas excursion, my trip to Thailand proved to be a traveling marathon. Over twenty-four hours had lapsed from the time I boarded the plane in Los Angeles until I reached the hotel in Bangkok.

During the first three days staff from over 24 hospitals and clinics presented data on their Matrix Model treatment progress. Many of the larger hospitals have successfully adapted the model to their populations' needs. Others are struggling with issues that we see here in our own communities: no transportation, addiction stigma, medication seeking, little family involvement, and lack of readiness for treatment.

As I listened to each presenter, I was amazed at the dedication of these people and how diligently they were working in order to accomplish the following in less than two years:

- Average duration of operation is 8 months
- Number of patients seen is 391
- Over 15% of patients completed program
- Over 800 hospitals and clinics are in operation
- One site has trained over 300 staff members
- 1,000 volunteers have been trained from 50 districts
- Present plan is to reach 7,000 district and sub-district clinics within the next year

This project took flight in August 2000, so all of this effort has taken place in a fourteen-month time span. The downfall to such growth in a short time is the difficulty of achieving a high level of efficacy. It occurred to us (the Matrix team) that most of these clinicians were attempting to start up a new program while responsible for their existing workload. In essence, these staff members are volunteers running Matrix outpatient programs. These clinicians complained little of being overworked and underpaid. They gave praise and thanks for a structured program they believe works. They expressed their frustrations with overcoming the addiction stigma and resistance to outpatient and group therapy, but are seeing the seeds being planted. They showed us business cards, jackets, and brochures written in Thai that included the Matrix Institute's logo. Their enthusiasm and generosity vastly outweighed my sleep deprivation and craving for french fries.

The flight back to Los Angeles took only thirteen hours (a big difference from the nineteen westward). We arrived early morning; so again, I had been awake for a twenty-four hour period. My first international flight, my first visit to Thailand, although a marathon, was a great experience.



Buprenorphine and Counseling: Combining Treatments for Effective Outcomes

Written by Don Mac Donald, M.A.

Matrix and UCLA ISAP have been engaged in a critically important and timely study led by Dr. Walter Ling comparing different kinds of psychosocial outpatient treatments and settings in conjunction with a medication for treating heroin dependence. Buprenorphine-Naloxone (Bup/Nx), an opiate used in pain management, was given to participating patients in conjunction with cognitive-behavioral treatment. Buprenorphine reduces physiological symptoms of opiate withdrawal and reduces the risk of relapse to heroin (the combination with naloxone protects against abuse by intravenous injection as injected naloxone blocks buprenorphine effects). Upon termination the withdrawal effects are far less severe than those associated with heroin or methadone. In the February, 2002 issue of *Counselor Magazine*, Dr. Westley Clark,

Director of the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT), reinforces this combination treatment as “an exciting era – a medical and legal breakthrough.”

Private physicians have not prescribed opiate medication for treatment of heroin dependence since 1919. Physicians will soon be able to prescribe Bup/Nx while, at the same time, referring these patients to professional addiction treatment programs. This will widen access to treatment and ensure that patients receive the necessary relapse prevention and education tools while being protected from opiate cravings. The patients receive a continuum of care – “one that uses

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primary care medical models, office-based treatment, and behaviorally focused models,” which Dr. Clark states as the best opportunity for heroin reduction.

At the Matrix site, patients met regularly with their physician to discuss and adjust their medication dosage. I then had an opportunity to meet with them for a detailed session of up to ninety minutes. They learned and practiced relapse prevention skills, such as scheduling, stress management, and the ability to separate thoughts, emotions and behaviors. The full study results are not yet published, but my patients spoke of their increased ability to concentrate, and to focus on changing or avoiding relapse triggers. It was rewarding to see the clients absorb the basic “brain model,” then put their new understanding into action to establish and protect their sobriety. They learned that they had to halt use of secondary substances, be able to recognize their many external and internal relapse triggers, and stop specific addictive thoughts. The majority of them saw improvements in their time sober, their health, and in personal effectiveness in general while they were in treatment.

It was also inspiring to note how carefully the clients used this combined treatment in a balanced way. They valued the medication, and said so, but understood that behavioral change was also essential. I was very encouraged by the potential for this new treatment option for opiate users. I believe it will give physicians and counselors a new structure for working effectively as a team and it could well allow clients the ability to join the mainstream of recovery, with all its benefits. This is motivating for us, as treatment providers, as well as for the clients.

Many Americans suffering with an opiate dependence go untreated. The most widely used treatment for opiate dependence, methadone, is rejected by some patients and regulations restrict others from entering treatment. The approval of Buprenorphine-Naloxone will allow physicians and counselors a new alternative for treating opiate dependence. The ability to “match” patients to appropriate treatments should increase, thus giving patients greater opportunity to gain a successful recovery.



Advisory Committees Are In Full Swing

Matrix Institute would like to thank all of the members who have become involved with our advisory committees at each location. We appreciate your time and interest in our organization, and hope that as committee members you receive an equivalent reward.

Thank you to each of you. We look forward to working together.

Inland Empire

Francis O’Leary, SAP
Larry Enrigue
Donald Kurth, MD
Steve Johnson
Keith Simpson, MD
Randell Walker
Kirby Palmer

Los Angeles

Artrice Arthur
Ellen Wohl, Pastor
Verna Gant
Nancy Eskinjian, Pastor
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Alan Eisner

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Elizabeth Suti, MFT
Larry Wolfe
Orlando Cartaya, MD
Penny Jacobs, MFT
Sy Levitan, PhD

San Fernando Valley

Bruce Steinberg, MD
William Perry, MFT
Teddi Forman, MFT
Barry Linnett
Terri David, MFT

Thank You

Schools Have Access to Accurate Drug Information

Written by Leana M. Gadbois-Sills

The recent *NIDA Notes* markets age appropriate drug education materials to be used as supplemental teaching tools with children between the ages of seven and seventeen. These sets are available to teachers, parents and students via the NIDA web site.

“*Brain Power*” is a six-module program for second and third grade students designed to provide a foundation for scientific information on substance abuse as well as initial stages of prevention. Kids in this program become “*NIDA Junior Scientists*” experiencing real science in terms and concepts they understand. “*Brains in a Box: What Your Brain Can Do*” is one module that focuses on how the four major areas of the brain function.

“*Mind Over Matter*” is a series of magazines and an interactive web site designed for grades five through nine. Based on the adventures of the main character, Sara Bellum, this series explores the effects of drugs and alcohol on the brain and body. Each issue presents general information on a specific substance in a fun and interesting way. “*The Brain’s Response to Marijuana*” lists common names of the drug as well as informs the reader of the potential psychological effects.

The high school curriculum is more intensive, designed to challenge and educate ninth through twelfth graders on “*The Brain: Understanding Neurobiology Through the Study of Addiction.*” These students are discovering how the brain is affected by substance use and that addiction is a chronic, but treatable disease.

For more information on these school programs visit www.drugabuse.gov. For *NIDA Notes* fax a request for subscription to (240) 632-0519 or email nidanotes@masimax.com.



2002 Makeover for Newsletter

The Matrix Institute newsletter is expanding. Not only in size, but in format and information. We have increased the number of pages to four complete pages of articles, reporting in the areas of treatment, training and education, and research. These areas are the focal point of our mission statement and will be seen throughout this newsletter as well as our redesigned web site, www.matrixinstitute.org.

In future issues, we will be adding an addiction treatment services column giving tips to professionals on specific substance abuse issues. This will feature Matrix clinicians and their expertise in drug and alcohol assessment and treatment.

We hope you all enjoy this newsletter as much as we enjoy developing it. If any of you have topics you would like to see addressed please contact us at the email provided below.

MATRIX NEWS

- Anyone who is interesting in contributing an article to this newsletter, please contact Leana M. Gadbois-Sills at (310) 207-4322 x-272 or email lsills@matrixinstitute.org.
- The Los Angeles 2002 Professional Series sponsored by Sierra Tucson and Matrix Institute began February 8th at the Radisson Huntley Hotel 9am – 11am. Two CEU credits are provided. June 7th is the next workshop featuring Kotra Ajir, MD on dually diagnosed patients. A charge of \$10.00 for the workshop is now required. For more information please contact Sierra Tucson at (800) 624-5858 x-3986.
- The Orange County 2002 Professional Series sponsored by Sierra Tucson and Matrix Institute begins March 22nd in Costa Mesa. For more information please contact Sierra Tucson at (800) 624-5858 x-3986.
- Matrix Institute is always looking for interns and licensed clinicians for our private and research programs. Please fax resumes to Mike McCauley (310) 207-6511.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S CORNER by Jeanne L. Obert, Executive Director

It is not unusual for people both in the field of drug abuse and outside our world to ask Matrix people “What is so different about the Matrix treatment program? Why should I recommend treatment at Matrix rather than with an individual therapist or in another outpatient program?” Here is a brief summary of the answers to those questions. First, the structure of the Matrix program was developed from empirically-based materials, meaning the program was put together from the beginning with interventions that have been proven to be effective. As more becomes known, the program is continually “upgraded.”

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Secondly, the therapists at Matrix are not just recovering people who have experienced the disease of addiction (although many of them have), they are trained, licensed mental health professionals who are able to evaluate and competently make an effective and personal plan for each person who presents for treatment. Patients are assigned a single professional who works closely with him or her throughout the entire treatment episode to effectively co-ordinate and deliver the very highest quality care.

Last, but not least, the hallmark of a Matrix outpatient program is the intensity of the structure. Regardless of holidays, vacations or natural disasters, the Matrix therapist is never out of touch with his/her patients for more than 3 days. This very individualized attention by a highly educated, extremely caring therapist using the very latest materials with proven efficacy is the essence of what is going on in the Matrix Institute offices here in Southern California. Our commitment is to continue this proud tradition.

Contact Us at: lsills@matrixinstitute.org
Or Visit our Website at: www.matrixinstitute.org