



Jul 28, 2010

Help's available for opiate addicts

By JORDAN CRAVENS

staff writer

Northwestern Ohio has a "doctor's office" for heroin and prescription drug addicts. It is located on Hancock County 236 in Findlay and has been open since May 2008.

At Anhedonia, instead of getting prescriptions for antibiotics, patients get doctors' orders for Suboxone, according to Angy Shaferly, owner of the business, who also works as a registered nurse there.

Suboxone, released in 2002, is a transitional drug used initially to give addicts a substitute for the opiates they crave, and eventually to wean them away from the drugs.

The self-described doctor's office sees patients from Hancock, Wood, Seneca, Wyandot, Allen, Hardin and Crawford counties, Shaferly said.

Suboxone costs about \$300 a month and Anhedonia accepts insurance.

With the first dose, the addict's craving is quenched almost immediately and withdrawal symptoms subside, Shaferly said.

"Within a day or two, they don't really have any cravings," she said.

Dr. Harold Barlekamp at Anhedonia sees about 25 to 30 patients a week, typically ranging in age from 18 to 60.

Between 60 and 70 percent of Anhedonia's patients are seeking treatment for pain medication addiction, while between 30 and 40 percent are there for heroin addiction, Shaferly said.

As a supplement to the medication patients are screened for drugs, and agree to participate in support groups. They are also urged to become involved in a 12-step program.

Since Suboxone is relatively new, its long-term success is unknown, Barlekamp said.

"The biggest drawback is that it almost works too well. It really gets people feeling confident and almost cocky," he said.

In 2009, Anhedonia treated about 120 patients. Roughly a dozen people returned to the office after relapsing, or being on the verge of it.

"You can put (addiction) in remission," Shaferly said, "but there is no guarantee it's not going to come back and bite you."

Once patients are off Suboxone, they will still feel mild to moderate withdrawal symptoms, Shaferly said.

"It's nothing compared to a full-blown opiate withdrawal," she said.

Anhedonia is not the only place to go for help for someone addicted to opiates.

Dr. Sam Schwendiman, a psychiatrist who just moved to Findlay, specializes in addiction treatment. He is authorized to prescribe Suboxone and offers individual therapy for opiate addicts. He accepts insurance for Suboxone, among other services.

His office is a branch of Memorial Hospital, based in Fremont.

Also, Century Health, a treatment center in Findlay, offers drug abuse outpatient services. A person could refer themselves to Century Health or be ordered by a court to enroll, according to Gary Bright, director of outpatient treatment services.

When enrolled, a person first undergoes an assessment, which seeks to determine what level of treatment they need based on the severity of the addiction and readiness for help, Bright said.

Century Health offers intensive counseling to groups and individuals, and encourages the person to get involved with a 12-step program such as Alcoholics or Narcotics Anonymous. One goal of the counseling is to educate the person on relapse prevention, he said.

"A lot of times, people don't have just the opiate addiction," Bright said. "They may need to be treated for alcohol, other drug dependencies and mental health issues."

In Toledo, Compass offers a residential, inpatient treatment program, in addition to a three- to five-day detoxification program.

In the longer-term residential, inpatient program, a person is enrolled between 30 and 54 days, according to Jessica Gonzalez, intake coordinator for Compass.

Compass also has a separate location for its methadone maintenance treatment program.

"Methadone maintenance can provide a short-term bridge into recovery, or be a lifelong tool to manage recovery from addiction to any kind of opiate including street and prescription drugs. It offers an affordable and healthy alternative to using," according to the Compass website.

St. Rita's Medical Center, Lima, offers a drug-abstinence detoxification program.

A patient stays at the hospital for a short period and is not given Suboxone or methadone, according to Jill Miller, clinical manager of addiction services.

The hospital also offers a three-week program of intensive outpatient treatment, in addition to group and individual counseling, and family education, she said.

The Maslow Center, also in Lima, provides individual and group counseling, education, and does referrals to other services which provide medicine to help cope with withdrawal.

Lutheran Social Services of Northwestern Ohio also has addiction help. It has branches, but its administrative office is in Toledo.

Further north in Albion, Mich., Narconon Freedom Center, which specializes in opiate addiction, offers both a drug rehabilitation program and a detoxification program. The drug rehabilitation program lasts between four and six months and does not use any medication to treat addiction, according to its website.

Another place to start looking for help is by using the Hancock County 2-1-1 system. It is a toll-free number people can call to get connected with community resources and volunteer opportunities, according to Amy Fisher, coordinator.

Online:

www.centuryhealth.net

www.ccrscompass.org

www.astopinc.com

www.ehealthconnection.com/regions/st_ritas

www.lssnwo.org

www.hancockcounty2-1-1.org

www.freedomdrugrehab.com

Cravens: 419-427-8422,

jordancravens@thecourier.com

Thursday: How to spot an opiate addict. Also, how are heroin and pain pills being abused?

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The Findlay Publishing Company

P.O. Box 609

Findlay, OH 45839-0609

Phone: (419) 422-5151

www.findlaypublishing.com

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