

Athens Area Commencement Center



Commencement Connection

Fall 2007

The Fight With Insurance

By: Rob Hinzman, Business Manager

Over the years, insurance companies are covering less and less for substance abuse and mental health benefits. Many insurance companies offer substance abuse and mental health benefits, but will find this as not being a medical necessity. It is unclear when substance abuse and mental health has not become a medical necessity. More people than ever are dying from one form of addiction or another. Or, the insurance companies are finding some sort of technicality of why they will not pay for treatment.

In short, consumers are paying their premiums for insurance, while they are not getting the benefits that are on their plan.

During a national treatment center conference I attended last year, I had the opportunity to discuss this with other treatment centers in the state of Georgia and Nationwide. They are also continuing to have to fight to get any benefits for substance abuse and mental health benefits from the insurance companies. Many treatment centers I talked with told me that the majority of their patients are paying out of pocket/private pay because the insurance refuses to pay. Sixty percent of Athens Area Commencement Center patients are paying out of pocket/private pay for treatment.

Athens Area Commencement Center continues to fight with the insurance companies to get some if any benefits for our patients. By doing this, we are constantly appealing denials, having conferences with the administrators of the insurance companies, and working with the billing agency we use to file the claims.

As Athens Area Commencement Center continues to fight for our patient's insurance benefits, we also encourage the patient to also call their insurance company for complaints and coverage. This problem continues to become worse as the years pass.

Many treatment centers will interrupt treatment and discharge a patient when insurance refuses or runs out of days for treatment. Athens Area Commencement Center has discussed this throughout our staff. AACC does not believe that an interruption of treatment is treating the disease of addiction. We are determined to find a solution for our patients to continue treatment when their insurance stops paying for them. Athens Area Commencement Center is constantly looking for solutions to make treatment more affordable.

ATHENS AREA COMMENCEMENT CENTER

Mission

Athens Area Commencement Center strives to be an outstanding substance abuse treatment program. Based upon our understanding of addiction as a family disease, we provide holistic and preventive care that is safe, confidential and is delivered in a therapeutic environment.

Services are provided with dignity and compassion by competent, qualified staff who have the necessary skills, certifications and credentials to ensure good outcomes. Care is individualized to best treat each client's needs. Different treatment modalities are provided and include, Ambulatory Detoxification, Day/Evening Outpatient Services and Aftercare. Client care is delivered in a fiscally responsible fashion.

Our primary goal is to discharge clients who contribute to their families, communities and nation by desiring and working for life-long sobriety.

Providing Quality Treatment with Less Dollars

By: *James L. Hinzman, MAC, CCS, Administrator*

Today, I had three motivated individuals seeking treatment for addiction sit in my office and request the opportunity to enter the Athens Area Commencement Center for addiction treatment. All three of the individuals had healthcare plans with a toll telephone number to call for verification of behavioral health benefits for addiction. However, all three of the Healthcare Plans had no agreements or provisions to finance Outpatient Treatment. Sadly, two had to leave the Athens Area Commencement Center without the help they needed for addiction and the other paid privately out of their pocket to begin Addiction Treatment.

About forty (40%) percent of individuals presenting to Athens Area Commencement Center have behavioral health benefits to cover their addiction treatment and approximately (60%) of individuals presenting for treatment are paying out of their pocket, yet at the same time are employed and/or have healthcare benefits.

There were more addiction treatment options for individuals thirty (30) years ago than today. What is so sad is that we have identified addiction as a Medical Disease with evidence based criteria and are not providing adequate Healthcare Benefits to treat it. The brain research identifies genetics as being at least sixty (60%) percent the medical cause of addiction. The addiction research literature also predicts that approximately ten (10%) of the population in the United States are addicts and alcoholics. One in four families is negatively affected by addiction. Yet hear me strongly, this medical disease is being discriminated against in the lack of addiction services and Healthcare Benefits being available for the treatment of addiction. Our children and family are discriminated against in seeking medical care and trying to treat the medical disease of addiction.

My prediction for the future is very alarming. I believe that the next generation will suffer the devastating effects in today's healthcare not treating the brain disease of addiction. Our children and grandchildren will reap the personal and society effects of addiction

being out of control. There will be more personal/medical injury from untreated addiction and society will reap the legal and employment effects of untreated addiction.

SO WHAT? Athens Area Commencement Center has been in the Athens area for thirty (30) some years. This community has been able to maintain treatment for addiction and we (Athens Area Commencement Center) have maintained up-to-date knowledge of addiction with the most recent cost effective treatment modalities. We are doing in Outpatient what we used to do in the hospital. We are treating addiction with less restrictive levels of care and for a lesser cost to the client. My staff are experts in the field of addiction, understands behavioral health concepts of "being out of control and powerlessness", the signs of withdrawal, and cognitive deficits.

The disease of alcoholism and drug addiction is treatable. Evidence based criteria are demonstrated by formulating data. But the healthcare payers do not really care about evidence based criteria. All one has to do is to visit Athens Area Commencement Center and see all the Aftercare Clients returning to Aftercare groups post treatment each week. I dare not leave the Athens Area Commencement Center parking lot on Wednesday and Thursday nights. For in leaving my parking space will result in me, the Administrator, losing my parking place due to the large number of recovering individuals in Aftercare groups. We at the Athens Area Commencement Center have approximately 65-80 Aftercare Clients, post treatment in recovery and attending weekly Aftercare. Addiction is treatable and cost effective to treat. We at the Athens Area Commencement Center will continue doing what we do best with the highest respect for our clients and them getting well and in recovery. The cost of treatment today at Athens Area Commencement Center is at least thirty (30%) less than five (5) years ago. Maintaining our quality of care while managing our costs become for us and most other treatment programs a balancing process.

Music of Recovery

By: *Joe Preston, L.C.S.W., NCACII*

I recently read John Sanford's novel *Broken Prey*. A subplot involved the protagonist and his friends trying to agree on a list of the greatest songs of the Rock Era. This started my thinking about songs that reflect recovery. Aerosmith's *Amazing*, Joe Walsh's *One Day at a Time*, Stevie Ray Vaughn's songs *Crossfire*, *Tightrope*, and

Wall of Denial are some of my favorites. There is also Michael Brown's Album, *Life on Life's Terms*, and T. Graham Brown's song *Wine into Water*, which Jim would like to make the Commencement Center's graduation theme song. Where have you noticed Recovery in music? Please share! (jpreston@thecomencementcenter.com)

Rituals

By: *Joe Preston, L.C.S.W., NCACII*

Clients at the Commencement Center often fear that they will never be able to experience pleasure or have fun with out drugs. Indeed, some of the popular literature about drug abuse, notably about methamphetamine abuse, suggests that the brain has been so damaged that pleasure may be gone forever. It suggests that people addicted to some drugs may never be able to recover. I recall being told that about heroin addicts. Given those ideas, I am amazed at how Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous have been so far ahead of scientific research. The very things that AA and NA members have been told by Sponsors to practice are being found to have a firm basis in science.

Last year I attended the Georgia Addiction Counselor's Association Semi-Annual Conference. I took a Pharmacology Course which demonstrated that the practice of ritualistic behaviors can produce neurogenesis. Neurogenesis is the creation of new neural pathways. This is the process, also called remapping, that allows us to begin to experience pleasure without drugs. This is the physical process in the brain that allows us to recover. Prayer, meditation, calling a sponsor and going to meetings are just a few examples of the rituals that help us recover. AA knew this long before we could prove it with science. Today, we have imaging techniques that show the recovery process in the brain. We have studies by Edith Turner and by Ernest L. Rossi. Those early folk in AA just knew what worked for them. They still work!

Athens Area Commencement Center



A Place of Healing...

Aftercare Reminders

By: *Karen Skinner, M. Ed., CACII*

Fall is one of my favorite times of year. I love most everything about it. It also brings to mind many wonderful memories, sometimes dangerous ones. The activities I associate with fall usually have alcohol somewhere in the mix. Labor Day cookouts, Football games, Halloween, Thanksgiving, leading into Holiday Parties all of these can be associated with addiction behaviors. My normal day to day life rarely has me being offered a drink but during the activities I associate with fall, this is a likely possibility.

Going through some files the other day I came across "Ways to Say No". I enjoyed the reminder of different ways to communicate the same thing and thought maybe some of you would enjoy them too.

Ways to Say NO

NO THANKS.....

- I feel good enough already. In fact, I feel great!
- I want a clear head to appreciate you fully.
- I'm on the wagon.
- I can't stand me any giddier.
- I don't drink.
- I can get the same effect just by taking off my glasses!

I'D LOVE ONE BUT.....

- I get high on grape juice.
- I'm counting my calories.
- I prefer to watch.
- It irritates my ulcer.
- I really don't like the taste.
- It's not good for my liver (heart, blood pressure, etc.)
- It's against my doctor's orders.

NOT NOW.....

- I'm testing my will power.
- The party's lively enough as it is.
- I'm out for football this year.
- I'm back-seat driving.
- I've given it up for Mother's Day (Mardi Gras, New Years, etc.)

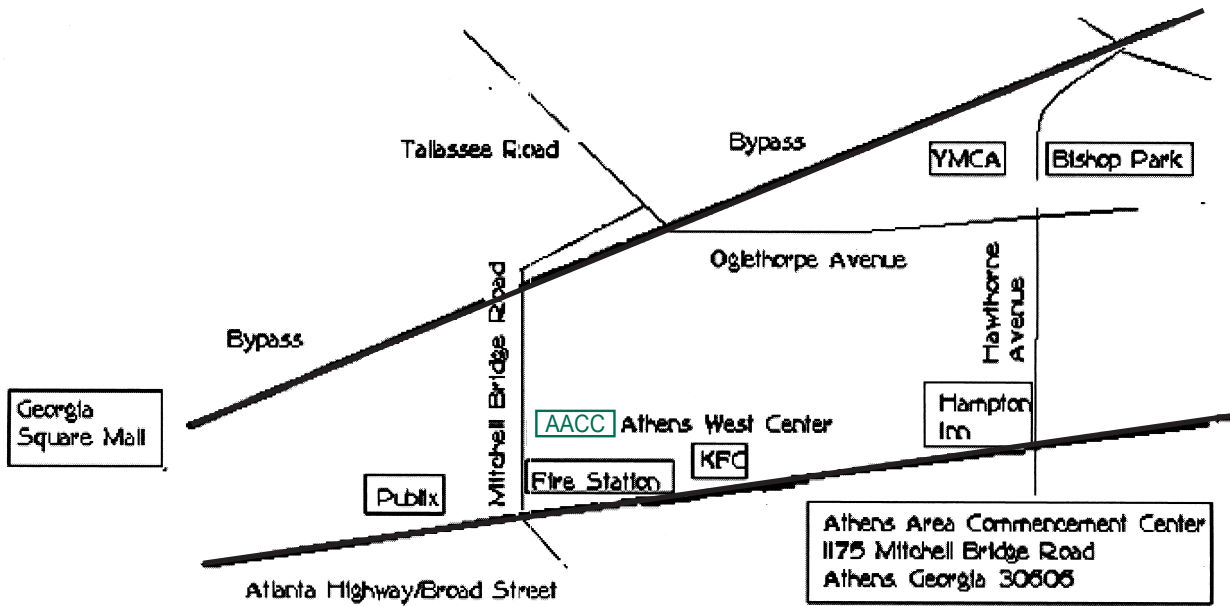
SORRY.....

- My shrink (doctor) won't let me.
- I never drink on Monday (Friday's, etc).
- I promised my parents I wouldn't.
- It makes me sleepy.
- I'm allergic to alcohol and fresh air.

WHAT I'D REALLY LIKE IS.....

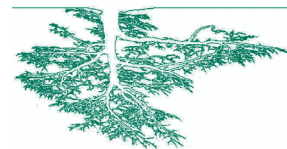
- A Coke (coffee, ice tea, etc.)
- A horse's neck (any bartender knows it: ginger ale, lemon peel)
- A little water on the rocks for now.

Athens Area Commencement Center is located near the intersection of the Atlanta Highway (Broad Street) and Mitchell Bridge Road.



www.thecommencementcenter.com
 We're on the Web!

A Place of Healing...



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