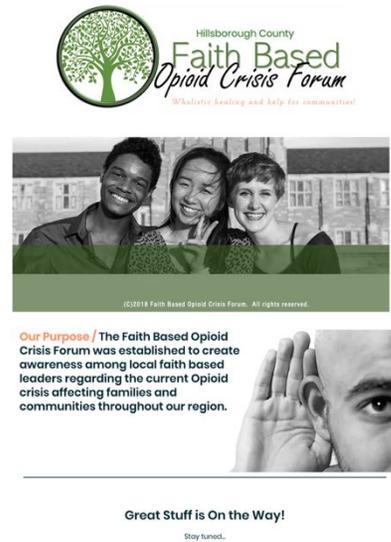


Dr. David Sherman, MD FASAM, is CEO of Wellness Treasure and medical director for Rockland Treatment Center in New Port Richey, Florida. He is a Fellow of the American Society of Addiction Medicine (FASAM) and board certified in Addiction Medicine with the American Board of Preventive Medicine. Dr. Sherman had a unique opportunity to speak at the Faith Based Opioid Crisis Forum in Hillsborough County, Florida. There is an outcry for assistance and guidance. The forum was established to inform and create awareness among the local faith-based leaders of the opioid crisis that is affecting friends and families throughout our community.



Dr. Sherman gave a presentation linking the clinical aspects of people afflicted with opioid use disorders with the spiritual healing that is salient for long term rehabilitation.



I am seeing more deaths as an addiction medicine physician than I ever did as a head and neck surgeon. This just plain wrong! Fentanyl, an opioid that is 100x more potent than morphine, has infiltrated our communities. I find fentanyl in heroin. I find it in marijuana. I find it in cocaine, methamphetamine, benzodiazepines, and oxycodone. I find it in every illicit drug that is pushed by drug dealers on the street. Unknowingly, people take these drugs laced with fentanyl and unfortunately, it is the last breath they take. Drug dealers have more and more potent drugs to take life than I have to preserve it. I will never give up so long as my patient will not give up on themselves. Society feels addicts are weak minded and do not have the strength to stop. Nothing can be further from the truth. It takes tremendous stamina and motivation to go so far down to lose everything that was once important to them. The goal is to channel that energy in a positive direction. When that occurs, the sky is not even the limit to achieve happiness and success.

I created a medication assisted treatment clinic (MAT) designed first and foremost, to stabilize my patients and prevent death. My clinic, Wellness Treasure, was created in response to the opioid crisis. If my patients are compliant with my prescribed Subutex or Suboxone, their cravings and withdrawal symptoms are eliminated. Then, and only then, can we initiate the long-term process of counseling, therapy, and rehabilitation. I am medical director for Rockland Treatment Center that provides the necessary individual and family counseling.

When a patient is active in their disease, the executive functioning and decision-making part of the brain is dysfunctional. They have lost their true self. It takes a year or more for the

receptors in the brain to return to normal. While the brain is healing and quieted with medication, the healing begins. I call upon you, the faith leaders in the community, to assist and guide the patient along a spiritual path. I would like to tell my patients that treatment for their chronic, relapsing disease is a life-long spiritual journey. I can't do that when they first see me because they are not ready to receive the message. It is in the timing. When the student is ready, the teacher appears. When that happens, it is imperative we work together as a team to guide the patient as the brain heals. There are many other chronic, relapsing diseases such as diabetes and hypertension. One of the true blessings of the disease of addiction is that ultimately the treatment is to be a better person.

Dr. Sherman will be speaking and conducting a workshop with the faith leaders in Pasco County in February of this year. In June he will be presenting the opioid addiction treatment paradigm to addiction medicine specialists and therapists at the annual Addiction Health Summit. This is the Florida chapter to the American Society of Addiction Medicine. More to come...

The Opioid Crisis: It's time for a change



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