



OPINION EDITORIAL

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REDEFINING ADDICTION TREATMENT

Opinion Editorial by Robert Pfeifer, founder of Sober College

WOODLAND HILLS, California – In 2011, the American Society of Addiction Medicine – an organization that represents 3,000 physicians and related professionals and widely considered the voice of addiction medicine – redefined addiction as a “primary, chronic disease of brain reward, motivation, memory and related circuitry.” And in doing so, they tasked addiction treatment providers to reinvent themselves, to redefine their approaches and to ensure their principles of treatment were aligned with this new thinking ... that the brain is diseased, damaged and in need of repair.

To date, many of the industry’s responses to the new definition of addiction have been medical in nature. They include the development of anti-craving medications such as Naltrexone and Acamprosate, the use of Topamax and even Suboxone. While these “cravings control” responses can be a critical part of the recovery process, they alone will not solve the problem.

In my estimation, this short-sided treatment would be akin to asking an athlete that recently underwent knee reconstruction to simply take anti-inflammatory medicines while ignoring the need to introduce range-of-motion and other therapeutic, rehabilitation exercises.

And, unlike other body parts, the brain brings cognition with it, meaning this treatment endeavor is both unique and complex, requiring a very sophisticated approach which includes examining the processes of the brain in order to design treatment that will rebuild and strengthen those brain functions that have been negatively impacted by addiction.

ADDICTION TREATMENT AT SOBER COLLEGE

The answer to addiction treatment, from the brain perspective, lies in a comprehensive and sophisticated approach. One that addresses a core problem: The brain is damaged and need repair.

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At Sober College, we examine and manage addiction treatment from a brain perspective. From brain health and cravings control to stress regulation, triggers management, cognition and even boredom prevention, we are focused on treating the addicted brain and its’ many needs.

And it is under this umbrella of understanding that addiction is a primary and chronic disease of the brain, that Sober College’s highly trained team of experts has developed a comprehensive, creative, refreshingly real and frankly, fun approach to healing for young adults. [See TABLE A]

TABLE A:

TREATING ADDICTION FROM A BRAIN PERSPECTIVE AT SOBER COLLEGE		
AREA OF FOCUS	HOW IT GETS TREATED	BRAIN IMPACT
Brain Health	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Time. Long-term abstinence through structured monitoring and drug testing. 2. Age-specific treatment environment. 3. Creative arts. Enhancing creative cognition. 4. Physical fitness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neuroplasticity
Cravings Control	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. (Medical) Anti-craving medications. 2. (Behavioral) Life Skills training. 3. (Behavioral) 12-Step Involvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical Intervention. • Right hemisphere integration.
Central Nervous System Regulation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Physical fitness. 2. Active scheduling. 3. Psychiatry. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased blood flow. • Dopamine/Serotonin regulation.
Stress Regulation Triggers Management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interpersonal neurobiology. 2. Psychotherapy. 3. Emotional Intelligence development through traditional urban experiential therapies. 4. Psychiatry. 5. 12-step involvement. 6. Yoga/Somatic mindfulness training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Left and right hemisphere integration.
Executive Functioning (Cognition, planning, organization, memory, learning, problem solving)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Academics, study and on-site college courses. 2. Neuropsychology. 3. Life-skills training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term potentiation.
Boredom Prevention	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sober fun and activities. 2. Age-specific treatment environment. 3. Community living. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brain engagement.

No one has all the answers, but for now, we’re happy to be “truly treating the limbic system”* with our efforts.

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*Quote from Jeff Georgi, M.A.H, LCS LPC, CGPA and former clinical director of Duke University’s Addictions Program during a visit to Sober College campus in 2009.

ABOUT SOBER COLLEGE

At Sober College, we examine and manage addiction treatment from a brain perspective. And it is under this umbrella of understanding that addiction is a primary and chronic disease of the brain, that Sober College's highly trained team of experts has developed a comprehensive, long-term, creative, refreshingly real and frankly, fun approach to healing for young adults (ages 17-26). Here, we encourage young adults to revel in sobriety by exploring life and all its possibilities while still in rehab. From continuing their education with our unparalleled, on-site, accredited college program to discovering passion in music with our resident rock star, from finding fitness, directing films and engaging in auto shop to testing boundaries with skydiving and showing off their gifts at monthly talent shows, we lead our clients down a path of self-discovery and self-expression to find self-esteem and self-determination. This is a treatment program that redefines rehab. Period. For more information, visit SoberCollege.com or call us at 877.635.2135.