

Adding dignity – and recovery - to addicts' lives

By Staff reports

GateHouse News Service

Posted Oct 08, 2008 @ 07:23 PM

Holbrook – OPINION

Adding dignity – and recovery - to addicts' lives

If a person came down with the measles, would everyone think he is a bad person?

Of course not.

Disease has many causes: viruses, germs, microbes, fungus, bacilli, stress, environmental contaminants, even genetic mis-wiring.

We don't label the victim of a disease as "good" or "bad." We treat such a person with compassion and care.

Alcoholism and drug **addiction** are diseases, not moral afflictions.

At the Weymouth Medical Practice on Broad Street, addicts both recover from their addiction and recover their dignity.

This two-year treatment plan stresses getting rid of the stigma of substance abuse and alcoholism as well as recovery.

Weymouth Medical President Dr. Punyamurtula S. Kishore says that people addicted to drugs are good people who have a bad disease.

"Addiction is a disease of stigma. It is seen as a bad thing and you are bad person if you have an addiction. We need to take the stigma out of this disease," Kishore said at a recent Weymouth Elks meeting.

For so many years, moral judgments were heaped on people afflicted with alcohol or drug addiction, judgments that further undermined their feelings of self-worth and compounded the difficulty of kicking the habit.

Such moral judgments cause compound fractures of the spirit.

Why some people are more biologically vulnerable to addiction is something we don't yet fully understand.

For example, a percentage of medical patients who receive a shot of Demerol go on to addiction, according to Kishore.

"Why do five or six people out of 100 individuals that are given a Demerol shot get addicted? I don't know," he said.

Weymouth Medical offers outpatient treatment, education, and Naltrexone, a drug that eases an individual's craving for alcohol, heroin and cocaine, Kishore said.

Weymouth Medical treats the whole person, not just an addiction.

Kishore also works intensely with the patient's family to help them understand the workings of this disease and begin to heal the family unit.

"When there is lying and stealing that has gone on by an addict, we help them to see that those are all symptoms of a disease and there is no ill will intended by the patient," he said.

When a person gets up in the morning, becoming an alcoholic or a drug addict is not at the top of his or her "to-do" list.

"Nobody wants to be an addict," Kishore said.

It's time to recognize and treat alcoholism and drug addiction as what they are: aggressive diseases, not moral weaknesses.