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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



GRATITUDE BOLSTERS RECOVERY DURING TIMES OF LOSS AND GRIEF

BY TIMOTHY P. DAVIS, MD, FAAP
TMF President

It is with great sadness that I sit down to write this, my second president's message to the staff and participants in the TMF program.

On August 23, 2020 we lost our 20-year-old grandson Michael to an automobile accident. Michael was bright, generous, funny, loving, and hard working. Unfortunately, he also thought he could drink and drive; he could not.

I have been trying to figure out how I could have raised his bottom to someplace above death. My conclusion is that there is really nothing I could have done to make this tragedy not happen. He asked me about four months ago if he could come to an AA meeting with me and I gladly agreed. We never got to do that and I wonder if we had whether he would still be alive today. I know I must simply accept what has happened and I will do that with the help of my family and my friends in the program.

This tragedy has made me more determined to do all I can to foster an attitude of gratitude in myself and others, and to work very hard with the TMF to help my fellow healthcare professionals get into and stay in recovery. I am grateful that I have been trusted

to be of service to my fellows in recovery by the TMF and will do my utmost to be worthy of the trust that has been placed in me.

Our Caduceus group in Chattanooga has been meeting on the Zoom platform and, as I understand it, the other groups have as well. I cannot tell you how much my participation in the TMF and its mission have buoyed me up in this time of grief. I also can't tell you how much my home group and my family have helped me through this. The TMF has saved my life and my career, and I hope to be a resource the program and its staff can use to help save other lives and careers.

In this time of uncertainty there are some constants that we can count on -- the constant of the willingness of the TMF staff and volunteers to do their utmost for us, and the constant of the love of God. I wish you all peace and happiness and offer you solace in your grief. I look forward to working with all of you to further the good work of this wonderful organization. May God bless and keep you. †



PERSPECTIVE & HOPE

BY JENNIFER RAINWATER
Executive Director



Radnor Lake is, by far, my favorite place in the city of Nashville. No

matter the season, whenever I have a free hour or two I like to enjoy a walk there. Last winter, as I was hiking the lake trail, I noticed how bleak the landscape had become. Brown leaves lined the path and there was

no wildlife scampering around. The trees were bare and I found myself longing for spring when the beautiful wildflowers would again appear and the trees would be full of vibrant green leaves.

In that moment, however, I began to notice something else. From my high vantage point I could see the entire lake.

Continued on Page 7

THE KOMBUCHA EXCUSE

BY MICHAEL BARON, MD, MPH
Medical Director



It is not unusual in the TMF Physician's Health Program to have participants test positive for alcohol. It's also not unusual to have those participants deny they drank, or to claim they must

have consumed it unknowingly. There is, however, a new twist in recent years that we have had to address.

We have had some incidents lately where participants blow a positive alcohol breathalyzer test, followed in a few days by a positive Phosphatidyl Ethanol (PEth) test. Some had alcohol markers in their urine specimen, also followed by a positive PEth test. When the presence of alcohol is detected, we are obligated to investigate and follow up.

While there are many types of screening tests to detect alcohol consumption, we mainly use the alcohol breathalyzer, PEth from a blood sample, and detection of Ethyl Glucuronide (EtG) and Ethyl Sulfate (EtS) in urine.

The four tests mentioned above detect alcohol by very different mechanisms: the alcohol breathalyzer detects volatile alcohol present in exhaled breath and can be positive for up to 12 hours after consumption; PEth is a biomarker for ethanol formed when ethanol combines with the phosphatidyl fatty acids found on the red blood cell membrane, and can be positive for up to three weeks after alcohol consumption; EtG and EtS are metabolites of ethanol which form in the body following exposure to ethanol, and can be detected up to about 80 hours after consumption. We don't rely on any one test, since false positives can happen. We obtain alcohol screens, alcohol bio-metabolites, alcohol bio-markers and collateral data to help us determine whether alcohol was indeed consumed.

In some cases where there was a positive alcohol test result, our participants claimed they drank Kombucha. I had not heard of Kombucha, so I had to do my homework. As it turns out, Kombucha has soared in popularity in the past five years, especially given our culture's focus on gut flora and digestive health.

Kombucha dates back to ancient times with roots in the Asian culture. It is a drink that is tart and sour, lightly carbonated, and full of probiotics. It is made by fermenting tea and sugar and uses a process known as a symbiotic culture of bacteria and yeast (SCOBY). This type of fermentation process will produce alcohol.

Under federal law, Kombucha with an Alcohol by Volume (ABV) of 0.5% or more must be regulated as an alcoholic beverage. Because of this, Kombucha makers have gone two different routes. Some have increased the ABV content and sell their Kombucha product as a beer, tonic, ale, or hard cider, with ABV contents ranging from 0.5%-8%. Others market their product as "No Alcohol," even though they have a measurable ABV content. In these no-alcohol products, like no-alcohol beer, alcohol



Photo by Athena Kavis on Unsplash

can still be present, but at levels of less than 0.5%. The consumption of "No Alcohol" Kombucha is the probable cause of - or maybe the excuse for - some of these positive toxicology tests.

Laboratory data itself does not make a diagnosis but it can, and at times does, support a diagnosis. The TMF-PHP uses laboratory data (toxicology monitoring) to help ensure and document abstinence. Some of our participants view toxicology monitoring as insurance. Many, especially those early in recovery, have admitted that knowing they would be screened kept them from using alcohol or other substances. We routinely warn our participants about inadvertent consumption of alcohol through cooking or medication; we now add to that list the risk of drinking Kombucha, a fermented herbal tea.

Fermentation is the process in which an agent causes an organic substance to break down into simpler substances -- almost always associated with the anaerobic breakdown of sugar into alcohol. It is exceedingly important for a person in recovery from a substance use disorder to know what they are consuming. One's life can depend on it as the accidental ingestion of alcohol, even a trace or small amount, can be enough to kindle the reward process, stimulate the nucleus accumbens, and cause craving and a resultant full-blown relapse. Dr. Mark Gold published work about unintentional exposure of opioids and sedative hypnotic anesthetics causing higher rates of addiction. His work

Continued on Page 7

GOOD ENGAGEMENT, CONNECTION TO RESOURCES WITH TN PSQ MENTAL HEALTH SCREENING TOOL

Less than a year after launching a new online mental health screening tool, the Tennessee Professional Screening Questionnaire (TN PSQ) has seen good engagement with more than 190 Tennessee health professionals taking the screening, and higher-than-average connection to nearby resources.

TMF Medical Director Michael Baron, MD, MPH, FASAM, is pleased with the performance of the TN PSQ thus far.

“I am so excited to see this project realized,” he said. “Since I joined the TMF, I have always wanted a proactive approach to physician health – a way that could preempt an intervention or formal referral to the TMF, or an employer or State Medical Board action. This tool is needed, especially now when physician stress is increased because of the pandemic.”

The TN PSQ debuted on February 3, nearly two years after the TMF began searching for new resources to help address a rise in mental health problems among health professionals. The tool utilizes the Interactive Screening Program (ISP) developed more than a decade ago by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP).



Working in partnership with AFSP, the tool was customized for Tennessee health professionals served by the TMF.

Strictly a non-crisis service, it offers an anonymous, confidential and free online mental health screening that results in referrals to appropriate mental health resources and optional interaction with a program counselor.

“This tool is anonymous, voluntary, free of charge, and the outcome is completely driven by the user,” Dr. Baron said, adding this should address health professional fears involved in asking for help with mental or emotional illness.

SEVEN-MONTH DATA

A comprehensive report looking at data from February 3-September 9 shows that screeners opting to dialogue anonymously with a program counselor were slightly higher than average, compared to users accessing the same tool through other organizations across the country (31.1 percent versus 30 percent).

For TMF and AFSP officials, one of the key and most

Continued on Page 5

KAMA FUNDS TN PSQ POSTCARD



Promotional materials for the new Tennessee Professional Screening Questionnaire (TN PSQ)

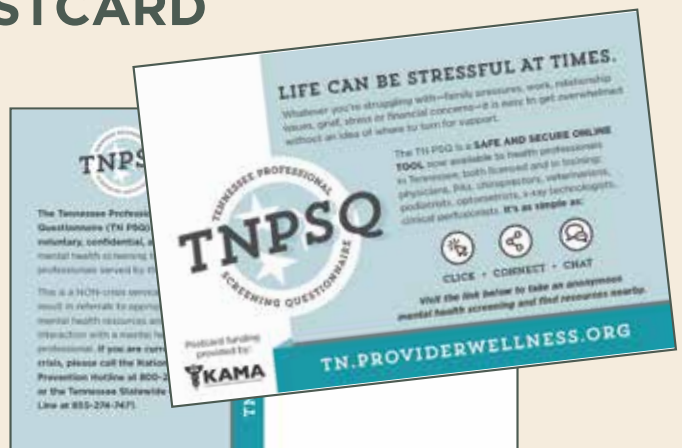
are now available and are

being distributed statewide, thanks to a grant from the Knoxville Academy of Medicine Alliance (KAMA).

“The TMF is pleased to announce its renewed partnership with the Knoxville Academy of Medicine Alliance for 2020,” said TMF Executive Director Jennifer Rainwater, adding that KAMA has partnered with the TMF annually since 2016.

“KAMA is proud to support the TMF again this year by funding a grant to print the promotional postcards for its new online mental health screening tool, the TN PSQ,” said KAMA Philanthropy Chair Kristin Kropilak. “Our mission statement aligns with this project to promote health education in our community. This is a proactive method to support our medical community,” she added.

The TN PSQ postcards are being distributed to hospitals, medical groups, medical schools, and other healthcare entities across Tennessee to raise awareness



about the availability of the new online mental health resource.

“Thanks to the wonderful donors who support our work and mission, the TN PSQ is available free of charge to the health professionals we serve,” said Ms. Rainwater.

Access the TN PSQ at tn.providerwellness.org or on the TMF website at e-tmf.org/tnpsq. 📌

FARWELL TO MS. BREARD AND MS. ALMADE, WELCOME DR. HOOPER AND MS. NICKS

In a year of change, including the summer retirement of longtime Administrator Mike Todd and installment of Jennifer Rainwater as executive director, the TMF is undergoing more transition this fall. The Foundation is saying goodbye to two staff members, longtime Field Coordinator Jeanne Breard and Administrative Assistant Alicia Almada, and welcoming Case Manager Dr. Nancy Hooper and Administrative Assistant Barbara Nicks.

"I am happy for Mr. Todd and Ms. Breard as they enter this new, enjoyable phase of life and for Ms. Almada as well, as she moves on to an exciting employment opportunity," said Ms. Rainwater, adding, "It has been a pleasure to welcome Case Manager Kathleen Haas earlier this year, and now our newest staff members, Dr. Hooper and Ms. Nicks. They are great additions to our TMF team."

CLINICAL STAFF



Ms. Breard

After 32 years with the TMF Physician's Health Program, Field Coordinator **Jeanne Breard, RN**, is retiring in November. Jeanne joined the TMF in August 1988 under the direction of the Foundation's first medical director, Dr. David Dodd. Ms. Breard provided aftercare and monitoring of recovering health professionals, phone triage and referrals, liaison and advocacy work with

licensing boards, insurers and healthcare facilities, and oversight of Caduceus group operations.

"I have been lucky to witness daily miracles of restored physical, mental, and emotional health in individuals and entire families," she said, adding, "I am blessed to have been a small part of the process and I thank the TMF leadership for believing in my capabilities and supporting me along the way."

She and husband Mike have moved to Big Sandy, TN, and have plans to travel the country in their fifth-wheel camper.

Her successor is **Nancy Hooper, DPh**, who came on board October 1 to work with non-Board participants in the PHP. She has over 20 years of pharmacy experience, including inpatient and outpatient hospital settings, long-term care, corporate, and community pharmacy. For the past few years, she grew and managed a clinical pharmacy team tasked with developing healthcare provider relationships and supporting care decisions.



Dr. Hooper

"As a pharmacist in long-term recovery and active member of the Tennessee Pharmacy Recovery Network, I am driven both personally and professionally to serve and advocate for people suffering with or in recovery from substance use disorder," said Dr. Hooper, adding, "Having personally experienced the freedom of recovery from substance use disorder, the mission of the TMF is very close to my heart and I am very grateful for the opportunity to support other professionals in their own recovery process."

When not at work, she enjoys the outdoors, whitewater kayaking, mountain biking, spending time with her family, and traveling.

ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM



Ms. Almada

Administrative Assistant **Alicia Almada** departed the TMF in September, after more than two years on staff. She has joined a Nashville-area travel nursing firm. Ms. Almada was an invaluable part of the team and is much missed by the TMF family.

Her successor is **Barbara Nicks**, who brings eight years of office experience into her administrative assistant position.

"I am very excited to be a part of TMF, and look forward to supporting the mission of the Foundation," she said.

Ms. Nicks is a Nashville native and enjoys spending time with family, cooking, traveling, and reading.



Ms. Nicks

Our best wishes go with Ms. Breard and Ms. Almada, and we welcome Dr. Hooper and Ms. Nicks. 🙌

EVENTS CALENDAR

SVMIC Seminars

Postponed through 2020
Check online options at SVMIC.com

TMF Board Meeting

October 30-31
Hilton Garden Inn, Brentwood, TN

TMF PHQIC Meeting

December 2, Location TBD

IN MEMORIAM: FORMER TMF BOARD PRESIDENT DR. JOHN RAYMOND NELSON, JR.



Dr. Nelson

The TMF mourns the loss of former TMF Board President John Raymond Nelson, Jr., MD, FACP, of Knoxville, on August 27. Dr. Nelson served as president for 11 years, from 1992-2003.

David Gerkin, MD, of Knoxville, who succeeded Dr. Nelson as TMF Board president in 2003, said Dr. Nelson will be very much missed.

“He was an incredible patient advocate but also had the amazing trait of loving his profession and in particular, his fellow physicians,” said Dr. Gerkin. “He had a heart especially for those under the burden of addiction or stress disability, and as TMF President served his fellow healers tirelessly. John is an incredible example of a life well-lived but even more important, a life of service to others.”

A U.S. Navy veteran and co-founder of Internal Medicine Associates in Knoxville, Dr. Nelson also served two terms as chairman of the Tennessee Medical Association (TMA) Board of Trustees, and in 2003 was honored with the TMA Outstanding Physician Award.

Dr. Nelson is survived by his wife of 64 years, Ann Hunter Nelson, two children and four grandchildren. In lieu of flowers, the family requested donations to the Church of the Ascension in Knoxville, or the Orange Grove Center in Chattanooga, and the TMF. 🇺🇸

THOUGHTS ON RETIREMENT: “BITTERSWEET” AFTER 32 YEARS

BY JEANNE BREARD, RN
Field Coordinator

On August 11, 1988, my life changed in ways I would never have imagined. I began as administrative assistant to TMF Medical Director Dr. David T. Dodd. In 2000, I became clinical coordinator and then field coordinator under the late Dr. Roland Gray, and since 2017 have been honored to work with our current Medical Director Dr. Michael Baron. During my 32 years, I have witnessed daily miracles of restored physical, mental, and emotional health in individuals and entire families. I am blessed to have been a small part of the process and I thank the TMF leadership for believing in my capabilities and supporting me along the way. My retirement will be bittersweet but my husband and I are looking forward to enjoying the quiet in our new “forever home” in Big Sandy, TN, with fishing excursions and RV trips to explore our beautiful country. Montana, here we come! 🇺🇸



Ms. Breard with former TMF Medical Director Dr. David Dodd (deceased) in 2005.

TN PSQ MENTAL HEALTH SCREENING TOOL *Continued from Page 3*

satisfactory findings of the report is the higher-than-average rate of requests for referrals to a nearby resource (68.4 percent versus 40 percent).

“The levels of engagement from TN PSQ participants were significantly higher than the national average users of this program, which speaks to how the program is meeting the needs of health professionals to connect to mental health services in a way that feels safe and accessible,” said AFSP ISP Senior Director Maggie Mortali.

PROACTIVE RESOURCE

Dr. Baron said the tool does not replace the comprehensive assistance, support, and advocacy offered by the TMF

Physician’s Health Program but is one more resource in its arsenal to help Tennessee health professionals who are struggling, especially as they cope with challenges related to the pandemic.

“The goal is to connect more people to the help they need earlier in the process - to be proactive versus reactive, hopefully before there’s a need for intervention by employers, a TMF referral, or licensing board action,” he said.

QUESTIONS?

For more information on the TN PSQ, visit e-tmf.org/tgpsq or contact the TMF at 615-467-6411 or brendaw@e-tmf.org. 🇺🇸

DONOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

OUR MAJOR CONTRIBUTORS

The TMF annually enjoys the staunch financial support of the **State Volunteer Mutual Insurance Company (SVMIC)**, the **State of Tennessee Board of Medical Examiners (BME)**, and the **Tennessee Medical Association (TMA)**. Together they provide approximately 63% of the annual budget for the Physician's Health Program. Without their support, our crucial work of **Saving Lives, Saving Careers** would not be possible. We are immensely grateful to them.

Below are contributors who provide the rest of our program funding. We thank each and every one of you for the support you give to the mission of **Saving Lives, Saving Careers**.

GIFTS FROM JANUARY 1, 2020—SEPTEMBER 30, 2020

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Erlanger Health System.....	\$10,000
Johnson City Medical Center Medical Staff.....	\$15,000
Vanderbilt University Medical Center	\$7,500

FOUNDATIONS & GRANTS

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Knoxville Academy of Medicine Alliance	\$1,000

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Heritage Medical Associates, PC	\$1,000
Summit Medical Group, PA	\$3,000+
The Jackson Clinic, PA.....	\$2,000+

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First Horizon Bank Knoxville-Trust Division.....	\$50*
Pinnacle National Bank.....	\$2,500

ORGANIZATIONS

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Memphis IDAA	\$256*
Tennessee Academy of Physician Assistants	\$1,000
Tennessee College of Environmental and Occupational Medicine.....	\$100*
Tennessee Radiological Society.....	\$1,000
Tennessee Society of Addiction Medicine	\$1,200
Tennessee Society of Anesthesiologists	\$2,000
West Tennessee Consolidated Medical Association.....	\$1,000

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We strive to ensure that all donor information is correct. If an error has been made, we apologize and ask that you call us at (615) 467-6411.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE *Continued from Page 1*

Photo by Jennifer Rainwater



Normally, when the trees are in full leaf you can't see much of the lake from the trail but with the foliage out of the way, I had a new perspective and could see more clearly. I was also filled with hope for the season to come because I had assurance that spring would indeed come again, as it has so many times before.

2020 has certainly had its bleak moments for all of us. We have watched Covid-19 devastate friends, families and businesses. Uncertainty about the future has filled us with anxiety at a level many have never felt before. But it has also changed our perspective. We can see more clearly the things that are truly important - family, faith, friendships, livelihood, freedom, compassion, health and humanity - and we appreciate those things more than ever. We have found new ways to connect and have reached out to people we haven't talked to in a while. As is so often the case,

adversity has prompted acts of kindness toward each other and given us a greater awareness of the loneliness and suffering of those around us.

Health professionals respond to crisis and suffering every day. They have chosen a profession of compassion and sacrifice, but only in the light of Covid-19 have we truly begun to appreciate what they do all the time. They carry a heavy load and sometimes they need our help. I could not be prouder to be a part of an organization that provides

that help, especially at a time like this. So many of you have astounded me with your generosity this year. At a time when it could have been easy not to give, you have given because you understand the importance of our mission. Please know how much we at the TMF appreciate you. Your generosity gives us hope that better days are ahead and that the TMF and those we serve will be stronger having persevered through this challenging time. †

Share your thoughts with Ms. Rainwater at jenniferr@e-tmf.org.

THE KOMBUCHA EXCUSE *Continued from Page 2*

was related to opioids and anesthesiologists but the theory is similar. Trace substances that bind to the reward circuit can elicit addiction in susceptible individuals.

IF YOU USE IT...

Recovery is hard enough without consuming a beverage that will cause a positive toxicology result and potentially lead to a full chemical relapse. Not knowing what ingredients are in a beverage or food product is not a good excuse. It is essential in recovery and for a healthy life to be aware of everything we consume and ingest. That recommendation also applies to medications, supplements and vitamins. Every recovering person including TMF participants should have and use a copy of "The Medication Guide for a Safe Recovery" by Dr. Paul Earley. This is a free booklet available online at paulearley.net. However, this booklet does not cover foods or beverages.

Toxicology monitoring has gotten very sophisticated with detections in the nanogram-per-milliliter (ng/mL) range. "If you use it, it will show," is a good motto. Please be aware of what you are putting into your body. This will help to prevent triggering a positive toxicology result and all the investigation, explanations, re-testing, and general headaches that normally follow. †

Share your thoughts with Dr. Baron at michaelb@e-tmf.org.



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PHYSICIAN’S HEALTH

TMF MEDALLION SOCIETY RECOGNIZES SPECIAL COMMITMENT

Every donation to the TMF is deeply appreciated. Yet, special acknowledgement is given to those of you whose contributions exemplify your commitment to TMF mission of *Saving Lives, Saving Careers*. Your leadership is recognized by membership in the **TMF Medallion Society**, honoring individuals who have given \$10,000 or more within the past 10 years. We honor you for your generosity and commitment.

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