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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



ON REFLECTION: TMF TENURE AMONG MY PROUDEST ACHIEVEMENTS

BY MICHAEL R. MILLER, DO, DAAFP
President

As I close out my tenure as TMF Board president and reflect on my years with the board, it has caused me to also reflect on my career. I have been able to not only achieve my family practice goals, but also to work in other areas I believe in and felt I could contribute.

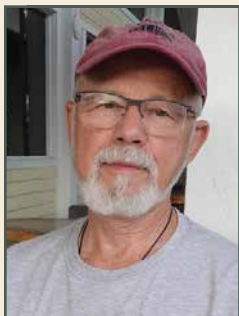
I worked with the osteopathic community as a board member to increase the presence of osteopathic medicine in Tennessee. The Southeast was the most

underrepresented area for DOs in the country when I started 32 years ago. The board was involved with the first osteopathic medical school in Tennessee, and there is soon to be a second.

I have had the opportunity to serve as the chief of Quality and Clinical Effectiveness for Ascension Medical Group; in that position I have tried to help find solutions to decrease the clerical burden on physicians and resulting dissatisfaction. Only most recently have we seen real

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PHP PROFILE



"ARE YOU READY FOR THE GIFT OF RECOVERY?"

BY JON LIEBERMAN, MD
PHP Graduate 1993

I was chilled to the marrow as I trembled, yet felt I was in burning hell. Where was I? I realized that I was awakening to the cruel tragedy of my life, a victim of my own demise. I thought to myself, this is what death must be like. I had fooled myself into thinking that I was a good person because I was working so hard to be a good doctor. Now I was going through opiate withdrawal in the lockup psych ward at Blount Memorial Hospital. I knew that to go any lower meant death and then hell.

One of the counselors brought a telephone to me. I held the receiver up to my ear; Dr. David Dodd's voice, with his beautiful Southern accent, boomed, "Dr.

Lieberman, are you ready for the gift of RECOVERY?" "Yes, sir," I replied.

I first met Dr. Dodd when he spoke to the incoming group of interns at the University of Tennessee, explaining the disease of addiction and how it takes a toll on doctors and others with good intentions. He shared that there was a pathway of recovery and that the TMF could help. Despite this warning, during residency I slipped deeper and deeper into chemical and alcohol dependence and impairment. I knew I was in trouble and that being an impaired doctor was wrong but couldn't stop - I was personally powerless.

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RADIOACTIVE PHYSICIANS: 100 YEARS OF CRIMINALIZATION

BY MICHAEL BARON, MD, MPH, DFASAM
Medical Director

Why do physicians convicted due to an Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) become unemployable, compared to those convicted because of an Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD)? During Drug War I, physicians who prescribed morphine were arrested and prosecuted under the Harrison Narcotics Act of 1914. Treasury agents used this relatively benign tax act to define “legitimate” medical practice and prosecuted thousands of doctors. Unfortunately, this approach to addiction hasn’t changed; in fact, it has gotten worse.

More than 100 years and many federal and state laws later, we are still convicting physicians with addiction and rendering those with certain types of addiction unemployable, even after receiving excellent treatment.

Just over half of physicians diagnosed with a substance use disorder use alcohol as their Drug of Choice (DOC), whereas, about 30%-40% of physicians use an opioid as their DOC. Most physicians in the OUD group are initially prescribed or exposed to an opioid by a licensed provider for legitimate medical reasons. And like 15% of the population, they have the genetics and trauma and very quickly develop the disease of addiction; eventually their use escalates and involves self-prescribing. Self-prescribing of an opioid or any controlled substance violates state and federal laws; it’s no secret that most physicians with an OUD have violated these laws at some point. However, these self-prescribed drugs are not diverted for money or for anyone else’s use; they do not end up on the street. Every self-prescribed pill written and filled by a physician with OUD is for their own use, much like every beer, whiskey, or wine bought by a physician with an alcohol use disorder is typically for themselves.

Addicts tend to have their preference or DOC - whether it is opioids, alcohol, tobacco, or even gambling - but addiction is a single disease with many phenotypes. It’s all the same disease, so why do we think of and treat these phenotypes so differently?

The Harrison Narcotics Act started this crescendo of criminalization and ruin in 1914. Today, when a physician is convicted of a controlled substance violation, they are added to the federal Office of Inspector General (OIG) list for a minimum of five years. Once added to the OIG list, the physician is excluded from working anywhere that accepts federal healthcare funds, which is basically everywhere. For at least five years, physicians on that list can receive no payment from federal health care programs for any items or services they furnish, order, or

prescribe. It makes the physician unemployable, basically radioactive. No one will go near them or employ them, because anyone who hires an individual or entity on the OIG list is subject to steep civil monetary penalties.

It gets worse. Many physicians with OUD who self-prescribe enter into a plea known as deferred adjudication, which means judgment of conviction has been withheld. Unfortunately, that does not give them a pass: in the eyes of the Inspector General, a deferred adjudication is a conviction, and that warrants inclusion on the OIG list.

Even worse, if a Tennessee licensed physician is convicted of a controlled substance violation, whether for self-prescribing of opioids or simple possession of a gram of marijuana, their medical license is revoked, automatically and without due process (TCA 63-1-170, passed in 2021):

If [...] the healthcare prescriber is convicted of a federal or state criminal offense that involves a controlled substance violation or sexual offense, then the chair of the licensing authority or administrative staff of the licensing authority designated by the chair shall automatically and immediately, without further action by the licensing authority, revoke the license of the healthcare prescriber.

By contrast, Tennessee physicians convicted of a DUI with alcohol use disorder have to jump through some

“...We cannot arrest ourselves out of the current opioid use/ overdose epidemic. Yet we continue to legislate archaic, draconian laws that do nothing but drive the sick physician underground and prevent those that do find recovery from practicing.”

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TMF FRONT AND CENTER AT FSPHP ANNUAL MEETING

The TMF was well represented and highly visible at this year's annual meeting of the Federation of State Physician Health Programs (FSPHP) in Minneapolis, MN in early May.

As FSPHP President-elect, TMF Medical Director Dr. Michael Baron attended the meeting along with Case Managers April Mallory, LCSW, Tamiko Webb, PhD, and Development Coordinator Brenda Williams-Denbo.

Dr. Baron was featured in a number of educational sessions. He served as a panel speaker for three sessions: "Healing HealthCare Together, The Dr. Lorna Breen Heroes' Foundation Mission to Support the Well-Being of the Healthcare Workforce;" the Federation of State Medical Boards & FSPHP Town Hall topic, "State Medical Boards and PHPs: Aligned to Support Physician Wellness and Protect the Public;" and "Medication for Opioid Use Disorder in Safety Sensitive Workers - A Panel Approach Utilizing Audience Response System."

In addition, Dr. Baron led a fourth session with Laura Hoffman of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) on the performance and results of

the TMF's online mental health screening tool titled, "A Proven Outreach and Prevention Tool for PHPs: AFSP's Interactive Screening Program."

The TMF will be presenting again this year on the TN-PSQ and the Interactive Screening Program at the 2023 American Conference on Physician Health on October 13 in Palm Desert, CA. 🇺🇸



The Three Presidents: Dr. Scott Hambleton (current FSPHP president); Dr. Baron (president-elect); Dr. Chris Bundy (immediate past-president).



Corey Feist, co-founder of the Dr. Lorna Breen Heroes' Foundation (podium), opens a panel discussion on provider health with FSPHP President Dr. Hambleton, Dr. Baron, and FSPHP Past-President Dr. Bundy.



Dr. Baron sits on a panel discussion for the Federation of State Medical Boards and FSPHP joint session.



Dr. Baron presents a session on the TMF's experience with the Tennessee Professional Screening Questionnaire (TN-PSQ) during an FSPHP breakout session. The TMF was the first State Physician's Health Program (PHP) to adopt the Interactive Screening Platform; other PHPs have since adopted the ISP or are in the process of adopting it for their states.



The TMF team at this year's FSPHP Annual Meeting (L-R): Development Coordinator Brenda Williams-Denbo, Dr. Baron, and Case Managers April Mallory and Dr. Tamiko Webb.

2023 CADUCEUS RETREAT: THRIVING IN RECOVERY

TMF participants, graduates and their families attended the 36th Caduceus Retreat at the Franklin Marriott Cool Springs on June 9-11. This year's theme was "Thriving in Recovery," and featured presentations by Chip Dodd, PhD, Colton Shannon, PhD, and Phil Herndon, MA. Sunday's Spiritual Session was led by Speaker Steve Lee. Thank you to our experts and our attendees for a great retreat! Next year's Caduceus Retreat is scheduled for June 7-9, 2024.



Colton Shannon, Chip Dodd, and Phil Herndon were the main presenters, speaking on "Thriving in Recovery." Dr. Dodd is the son of the late Dr. David Dodd, who served as TMF medical director from 1984-2002.



TMF Medical Director Dr. Michael Baron (center) poses with Board President Dr. Michael Miller and Physician Health Quality Improvement Committee Chair Dr. J.D. Rosdeutscher.



Speaker Steve Lee shares his recovery story in the Sunday session titled, "The Key is In the House."



Chip Dodd speaks to TMF attendees at the 2023 Caduceus Retreat, held June 9-11 at the Franklin Marriott Cool Springs.

“Where were YOU in



**THAT'S THE YEAR THE TMF PHYSICIAN'S HEALTH PROGRAM
BEGAN AS AN IMPAIRED PHYSICIANS COMMITTEE
OF THE TENNESSEE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION.**

The Tennessee Medical Foundation has been celebrating its 45th anniversary all year and looking back at our founders, the early days of what would later become the Physician's Health Program, and where we are now.

As part of that celebration, we asked our supporters, "Where were YOU in 1978?" We received some wonderful replies and some PHP stories from physicians across the state. Here is one memory submitted by a former PHP participant:

Where was I in 1978? Well, here's a story for you. I'm not much of a writer, but here goes...

I was three years out of high school and a student at MTSU (Middle Tennessee State University), hell-bent on going to medical school. I worked at Rutherford County Hospital as a respiratory therapy technician and in my free time at work, bugging any doctor I could find into letting me watch/participate, etc., in patient care, procedures and surgery. I was always hanging around the ER asking the young docs how they got into med school, what it was like, etc. I soon got to know (the late TMF Medical Director) Dr. David Dodd. Dr. Dodd's surgical office was right across the street from the hospital, and he was one of the more approachable physicians. He used to let me go into surgeries and observe. I can remember some of the things he said during surgeries and one in particular still makes me laugh out loud. I worked nights and Dr. Dodd did his

surgeries at random times during the wee hours; usually things were quiet, so I had free time to observe. Eventually I got accepted to med school and told Dr. Dodd. His exact words were, "Boy, come over to my office and I'll tell you what being a doctor is all about," and sure enough on my way out of town, enroute to medical school in Johnson City, I stopped by his office and talked to him. I'm forever grateful to him for keeping my enthusiasm for medicine alive during my college days. Long story short, several years later I found myself sitting in his home office (for the TMF) discussing how I got there. He remembered me from the Rutherford County hospital days. So once again, I'm forever grateful to Dr. Dodd. He was a caring compassionate man and all doctors of my generation, even the ones who never actually directly used or needed his services, owe him a lot.

That's the *Readers Digest* version of where I was in 1978.

Thank you to our anonymous submitter and to all of our donors and supporters who shared memories of the TMF over the years! Check out our website to learn more about our history: e-tmf.org. 🙏

DR. TRIGGS RECEIVES CPF HONOR



Photo courtesy of CPF

TMF Caduceus Group leader Elizabeth Triggs, MD, received the Excellence in Children's Health Award earlier this year from the Cumberland Pediatric Foundation. The award is given annually by CPF to individuals who have made outstanding contributions to promoting or improving the well-being of children.

Dr. Triggs was honored for her long-term service to Tennessee families, her role as an advocate and mentor to academic- and community-based pediatricians, and her involvement in research and education programs for physicians and medical providers. She was previously honored in 2019 as a Pioneer of Hope by Vanderbilt's Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital.

Congratulations to Dr. Triggs, and thank you for all you do for Caduceus group participants! 🙌

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE *(Continued from Page 1)*

hope for improvement there. My work with a technology company for the past six years has allowed me to see the acceleration of artificial intelligence. I have been allowed to test a product that is hands-free and allows me to focus completely on the patient; it also delivers a formed note created from our interaction that is amazing. I can consider the possibility of the return of the joy of medicine to my practice.

But I am most thankful for my opportunity to work with the TMF. This is a dire time for physicians and the levels of stress and distress show that the TMF has never been more needed. Each year, more than 1 million patients lose their physician to suicide. The female physician suicide rate is 250%-400% greater than non-physician females, while male physicians are twice as likely as the general male population to die by suicide. Burnout is now estimated at 58%-64% of practicing physicians. To know that an organization exists for our assistance and advocacy is reassuring. This program is a real solution for health professionals in trouble. During my time on the TMF Board, we also oversaw the initiation of the Tennessee Professional Screening Questionnaire (TN-PSQ), which offers direct interaction with a mental health provider with every individual who takes the screening. I have witnessed the increasing number of health professionals benefiting from this resource.

I am grateful to have been given the privilege of serving on the board. Those I have served with have made my time a joy, and I could not imagine a more professional, competent, and welcoming group than the staff of the TMF. I sincerely thank you all. 🙌

Michael R. Miller, DO, DAAFP
President

EVENTS CALENDAR

American Conference on Physician Health
Oct 11-13, 2023

JW Marriott Desert Springs — *Palm Desert, CA*

TMF PHQIC Meeting

Dec 6, 2023

Tennessee Medical Association — *Nashville, TN*

FSPHP Annual Education Conference

April 17-21, 2024

Grand Hyatt Nashville — *Nashville, TN*

TMF Caduceus Retreat

June 7-9, 2024

Franklin Marriott Cool Springs — *Franklin, TN*

IDAA Annual Meeting

July 10-14, 2024

Baltimore Marriott Waterfront — *Baltimore, MD*

PHP PROFILE *(Continued from Page 1)*

Dr. Dodd, I am convinced, was on a mission and had a calling. He was a hardworking, feet-on-the-ground crusader who went to extremes to bring back the impaired and lost. In less than 24 hours he flew to Knoxville and drove to the hospital that held me. Years later, he even flew at his expense to educate the Alaska State Board of Medical Examiners, where I had moved to practice general surgery.

I was one of the impaired and lost, but today I am so blessed with peace. Things would not be as they are for me had the Lord not given me a drink of the living waters flowing through David Dodd, and a path to recovery and redemption through the Physician's Health Program. 🙌



THE POWER OF PERSISTENCE

BY JENNIFER RAINWATER
Executive Director

I read an article recently about eight famous successful people who had some challenges that many would see as insurmountable. Oppression, poverty, severe physical disabilities, personal and professional failures – each of these people suffered considerable setbacks due to these challenges. But they had one thing in common: persistence. They kept going, kept pursuing, kept pressing on despite their circumstances.

As we look at the challenges of addictive disease, mental illness, burnout, and suicide, they can sometimes seem insurmountable. The opioid epidemic in our country seems too big a foe to overcome. But at the TMF we overcome these challenges, one person at a time, with persistence. We keep helping, educating, seeking, and reaching healthcare providers in Tennessee. Our participants also know the power of persistence. They keep pursuing solid recovery and better mental health, and the TMF is here to help them every step of the way.



Your persistence in giving to the TMF allows us to keep going, keep helping, and keep overcoming these challenges in Tennessee. We are grateful for your continued support! ♡

MEDICAL DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE *(Continued from Page 2)*

state criminal justice hoops, but they will be appropriately referred to the TMF-PHP for an assessment and treatment, if indicated, and offered a path to recovery and restoration. Their medical license remains intact.

Recovery and restoration should be extended to all health professionals with addiction, regardless of their drug of choice. It is evident that we treat opioids and other controlled substances very different from alcohol and tobacco, yet alcohol and tobacco kill more people than all the controlled drugs or scheduled medications combined.

Many years ago, I was told by a friend at the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation (TBI) that we cannot arrest ourselves out of the current opioid use/overdose epidemic. Yet we continue to legislate archaic, draconian laws that do nothing but drive the sick physician underground and prevent those that do find recovery from practicing.

The data is clear: a physician treated and monitored by the TMF-PHP has a lower risk of drug or alcohol use than the average physician. A treated and monitored physician also has a lower malpractice risk than the average

physician. In other words, the addicted physician who is treated and monitored and in recovery is safer, better, and a lower risk than their non-recovering peers. And yet we make them radioactive, unemployable.

We cannot afford to lose healthy, productive physicians or any healthcare provider to laws and rules that are counterproductive and even unconstitutional. We need to re-tool our approach to addiction and change state and federal laws that “irradiate” healthy recovering physicians and revoke the licenses of those physicians whose addictions involve controlled substances. The TMF reminds you that you have as much right as any other citizen to voice your opinion on this matter. ♡

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



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CHANGE OF ADDRESS

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Thank you for helping us keep in touch!

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LIFE CAN BE STRESSFUL AT TIMES.

Whatever you're struggling with—family pressures, work, relationship issues, grief, stress or financial concerns—it is easy to get overwhelmed without an idea of where to turn for support.

The TN PSQ is a **SAFE AND SECURE ONLINE TOOL** now available to health professionals in Tennessee, both licensed and in training: physicians, PAs, chiropractors, veterinarians, podiatrists, optometrists, x-ray technologists, clinical perfusionists. **It's as simple as:**



CLICK • CONNECT • CHAT

Visit the link below to take an anonymous mental health screening and find resources nearby.

TN.PROVIDERWELLNESS.ORG