

PROMISING PRACTICES



Lights, camera, action: Federal agency gives audiovisual life to methadone treatment

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Although methadone can be considered the gold standard for the safe and effective treatment of patients with opiate addiction -- whether from pain pills or heroin -- it is not widely promoted in the medical community or accepted by the public. This is surprising because medication is embraced as one of the first lines of treatment for disease in our Western culture.

Society's lack of understanding methadone made an invitation from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration/Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (SAMHSA/CSAT) exciting for our organization, [Anti-Aging and Longevity Center of Texas, P.A.](#) The federal agency asked to feature our organization in a documentary to raise awareness about using methadone safely and effectively. The agency asked to interview and film staff members and patients on site in our Dallas clinic. Four other methadone programs across the country were also invited to participate in the film's making.

Since 2003, Anti-Aging and Longevity Center of Texas has provided outpatient treatment for all substance abuse, although our primary focus is on persons with addictions to opiates. We use methadone, suboxone, and acu-detox (a specific acupuncture protocol) for opiate withdrawal. We also offer maintenance treatment.

Being selected for this documentary validated what our patients, other stakeholders, and peers already knew: We work hard to provide a treatment environment that is not a dose-and-go methadone program. The persons we serve trust that our recovery program supports them in

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improving the overall quality of their lives. Our clients believe we provide the best possible care with respect, dignity, and compassion.

We agreed to a date and began preparing for the filming. SAMHSA/CSAT provided possible questions for the interviews and the settings it wanted to film. Patients and staff members were asked to sign consent forms. A few persons chose not to be filmed, and we respected their wishes.

The day of the shoot was exciting. Filming started around 5:30 a.m. and concluded at noon. The documentary crew was professional and mindful of the persons who didn't want to be filmed. The crew interviewed patients who were relatively new to the program as well as those who had been in treatment for years. The interview questions ranged from the effectiveness of methadone to the value of counseling provided by the clinic. Everyone was given time to fully and comfortably respond to the crew's questions.

The feedback from the patients and staff members about the filming experience was overwhelmingly positive. Of course we told all of our stakeholders, including family members and interested parties -- and maybe even a few adversaries -- about this honor for Anti-Aging and Longevity Center of Texas. SAMHSA/CSAT said it would make the finished documentary available to methadone clinics in the future.

Safe and effective treatment is important. Improved quality of life is equally important. The SAMHSA/CSAT documentary will go a long way in bringing these facts to life.

For more information, contact Rick Bingham, clinic director, Anti-Aging and Longevity Center of Texas, P.A., wildernessexpedition@verizon.net. The organization's website is at www.addictioncareclinic.com.

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