

Helping an Employee with an Addiction - Can be an Organization's Greatest Health and Wellness Achievement

By Julie Bowles and Simone Arbour, PhD

Over the past few years, there has been a shift in what defines a successful organization. No longer is the balance sheet the main indicator. Now, healthy workplaces and quality health and wellness programs are one of the most important measurements of successful organizations. Companies receive recognition for their initiatives to promote employee health and wellness and proudly market their achievements. Employees may seek employment with organizations that promote employee health and wellness due to their dissatisfaction of the "work-life balance" of their current job. Potential new employees compare health and wellness programs and attitudes of future employers when choosing their next job. Employers cannot afford to overlook the role they play in nurturing a healthy workplace and happy employees.

Organizations who have embraced this new attitude of viewing their employees as more than just human resources are to be commended. However, while programs are available to help employees keep physically fit, eat healthy and manage stress, many employers still do not recognize the important role they can play in helping someone regain their health that has been lost to an addiction.



When employers are asked to consider the prevalence of addictions among their employees, they will often underestimate or even deny that there are any problems. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 76.8 per cent of people with alcohol and illicit drug addictions are employed.¹ This finding dispels the myth that addicts are down and out and homeless. For many people struggling with an addiction, their work

performance can be the last area of their life to be affected. While family and social relationships may have been destroyed by their behaviours, they are still able to continue to work.

Addiction in the workplace is very costly. The cost of lost productivity in Canada due to alcohol and drug addictions was \$24.3 billion in 2002.² The following analysis captures the financial burden of an addicted employee. Using the example of a registered nurse, the analysis considers the effects of absenteeism, tardiness and productivity; three areas of performance that are most impacted by an addiction.

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BELLWOOD OUTCOMES PUBLISHED

Bellwood's Research Department, under the direction of Dr. Janice Hambley, Ph.D., C.Psych., recently published the results of an indepth outcome study of Bellwood clients six months post treatment. The study was conducted by Dr. Hambley, Dr. Simone Arbour, Ph.D., and Ms. Lakshmi Sivagnanasundaram, BA, and was published in the June 2010 issue of the Journal of Substance Use. Bellwood has been conducting outcome studies relating to

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Analysis is based on the average salary of \$61,971 for a Registered Nurse with three years of service (<http://ona.org>).

- Are reports regularly submitted late and other deadlines not met?
- Is there a pattern of absenteeism on

mood changes and an inability to cope with unexpected changes?

Being aware of these indicators can help managers and supervisors identify situations and intervene when they feel an employee may be struggling with an addiction.

Many employers are not aware of the financial impact of an addicted employee as illustrated earlier in this article. By not understanding these costs, they cannot appreciate the long-term value of an investment in treatment for their employee. In place of interpreting the results of the earlier analysis as costs, the employer should instead view them as savings. Thus, over a three-year period, the organization could save \$21,215.10 in salary-related costs alone if an addiction was no longer impacting the employee's work.

By financially supporting the employee to enter a quality treatment program and being involved in their treatment and recovery in a supportive way, an organization can have a positive impact on the health of the employee and the overall well-being of the workplace. Expanding on the earlier analysis, it can be demonstrated how net savings can be realized if an organization is supportive of their employee's treatment. The cost of a quality and comprehensive 30-day residential addiction treatment program, including one year of continuing care and a valuable program for family members, is estimated at \$18,000.

The positive impact of treatment on workplace performance has been documented in outcome studies completed by Bellwood Health Services. In a six-month follow-up study, clients who had completed Bellwood's treatment ... *continued P. 3*

Cost/Year	
Absenteeism (days/year x daily salary)	\$4,565.99
Tardiness (days/year x daily salary)	\$578.45
Loss in Productivity	\$2,139.41
Total Cost	
Cost-benefit (formula from Jordan et al)	\$7,283.85
Total cost over three years of service	\$21,851.53

There are many other cost factors that are not considered in the above equation, including accidents on the job, errors, costs associated with dismissal, arbitration, hiring and training, and the utilization of health benefits.

In addition to the measurable financial cost, there are a number of other factors associated with an addicted employee in the workplace. They cannot be relied on to be present and productive. They can negatively impact the productivity and morale of their co-workers. Their actions and behaviour might place their employer in a position of liability or bring negative publicity to their employer.

Understanding how an addiction can manifest itself in the workplace is the first step in being able to help an employee.

Lateness and absenteeism

- Does your employee frequently come to work late, leave early, and take extended coffee, lunch or supper breaks?

Mondays, Fridays and after payday?

- Has the employee become moody and argumentative with supervisors and/or peers?
- Is the employee often not at their workstation?
- Do you notice frequent visits to the washroom or medical department?

Accidents

- Does impaired or faulty judgment cause a worker to become overly cautious to the point of slowing down production or becoming a safety hazard to himself/herself or others?
- Does the employee cover up for accidents rather than assuming responsibility?
- Do you notice a lower quality of work than what used to be done?
- Are there unexplained memory lapses, a decline in personal grooming habits,

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... Helping an Employee with an Addiction *continued from P. 2*

Total savings over three years of service because an addiction is no longer impacting the employee's work	\$21,851.55
Cost of a 30-day residential treatment program	\$18,000.00
Net Saving	\$3,851.55

program for substance abuse reported a 79 per cent decrease in absenteeism, a 90 per cent decrease in incidences of arriving late or leaving early, and a 78 per cent increase in productivity.

As an employer, you need to recognize the role you can play in helping an individual overcome an addiction and once again be a valuable member of your organization. Bellwood Health Services outcomes have shown that individuals who have had the support of their employers during treatment have had the most successful recoveries. Financial assistance for treatment is important. Offering financial help can show your employees that you value and believe in them and that they are a worthwhile investment. This commitment to your employee will usually be reflected in their commitment to be successful in their recovery. In addition to helping financially, there are many other important ways that you can help. The following are some suggestions to guide you when helping an employee deal with an addiction.

On a daily basis, be open with all of your employees and show that you care. Build relationships that will allow someone to feel safe in approaching you if they are struggling with an addiction.

- Become more knowledgeable about addiction as an illness. Learn to identify potential signs that your employee might have a problem and how to approach him/her if you are concerned about his/her behaviour.
- Be supportive and communicate the value you place on your employees, both as individuals and in their contribution to the organization.
- Encourage and support them in seeking help and identifying the best quality treatment provider.
- Be involved in their treatment as appropriate and learn how you can support them both during treatment and when they return to work.

- Outline your expectations relating to involvement in continuing care and support programs following treatment, reporting, monitoring and testing as conditions of your support and continued employment.

Successful treatment and recovery from a workplace addiction should be a team effort. However, as an employer, it is important to remember that while you can intervene and be supportive, the employee is ultimately responsible for the outcome of their recovery.

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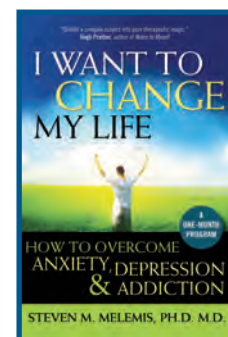
References:

- 1) "Addictions in the Workplace: A Problem Worth Solving". Alive and Free. Hazelden Foundation. March, 2004
- 2) Rehm et al. The Costs of Substance Abuse in Canada 2002. Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, (2006).

Dr. Steven Melemis Receives Dr. Gordon Bell Journalism Award

The Gordon Bell Journalism Award was established in 2006 and is supported by Addictions Ontario. Dr. Bell, founder of Bellwood Health Services and the Donwood Institute, was a long-time advocate for education and awareness of addiction issues, treatment and recovery. He wrote two books, published numerous articles in scientific journals and produced over 20 films. The recipient of the Gordon Bell Journalism Award is recognized at the Addictions Ontario annual conference.

The 2010 recipient of the Gordon Bell Journalism Award was Dr. Steven Melemis, author of "I Want to Change My Life: How to Overcome Anxiety, Depression & Addiction."



Dr. Steven Melemis accepts the Gordon Bell Journalism Award from Bellwood President Laura Bhoi (left) and Bellwood CEO Linda Bell (right).

Who's New At Bellwood

Gilatha Alexander – RN; **Margo Farah** – Therapist; **Alissa Greer** - Research Assistant; **Judith Hylton-Davis** – RPN; **Naheed Jaffer** - Senior Financial Analyst; **Colleen Lamond** - Intake Counsellor; **Will Marlatt** - Outreach and Education Specialist; **Sharon Mendes** - Finance Administrative Assistant; **Annette Mendezcuria** - HR Assistant; **David Norris** - Addiction Counsellor; **Lindsay Shapiro** – Therapist; **Cynthia Shea** - Intake and Assessment Counsellor; **Diane Wannop** - Receptionist; **Natasha Winders** - Recovery Counsellor

Happy Retirement to ...

Cathy MacDougall - Cathy joined Bellwood in 1993 as a nurse and also worked in the Family Program. She is best known by clients and referents in her role as an Assessment Counsellor where she has been a member of the Intake and Assessment team for eleven years. Throughout her time at Bellwood, Cathy has brought her excellent clinical and nursing skills to the job, as well as her great sense of humour.

Sheila Brigger - Sheila has been the face and voice of Bellwood since 1990. As Bellwood's receptionist, Sheila has welcomed thousands of individuals and their families over the telephone and through our doors with a friendly smile and warm, caring nature.

We wish Cathy and Sheila many years of happiness.

The Many Faces of Addiction 2010

On September 23rd and 24th, over 225 corporate and healthcare professionals from across Canada met at the Ontario Science Centre for Bellwood's second annual addiction symposium. Topics ranged from the neurobiology of addiction and recovery, to clinical practice techniques in treating addiction and other mental health disorders, to the practical issues of managing addiction in the workplace.



Inspirational Speaker
Sue Minns

Watch our website
for details of our
2011 symposium.



Dr. Cardwell Nuckols



LCol Stephane Grenier
and Bellwood CEO
Linda Bell



CFL Hall of Famer
Terry Evanshen

... Bellwood Outcomes

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client recovery since 1990.

Comparing Outcomes for Alcohol and Drug Abuse Clients: A 6-Month Follow-up of Clients Who Completed a Residential Treatment Program

Abstract

Objective: The present study examined the impact of an inpatient addiction treatment program and whether client-related treatment outcomes were moderated by addic-

tion type – 1) alcohol only, 2) cocaine only or with alcohol, 3) cocaine with other substances, 4) prescription drugs, and/or cannabis.

Method: Clients completed self-reports of their substance use and quality of life during their first week in treatment and at 6-months post-discharge. Pre-treatment motivation and post-treatment aftercare attendance were also assessed.

Results: Overall, a positive impact of the addiction treatment program was noted as clients reported a significant reduction in substance use and improvement in quality of life. Results also demonstrated that drug of choice impacted recovery status such that compared to cocaine poly substance clients,

alcohol clients obtained significantly higher scores on quality of life measures at both pre- and 6-months post-treatment. However, cocaine poly substance clients also demonstrated significant improvement and were also significantly younger than alcohol only clients and were less likely to be married or employed.

Conclusions: In general, substance use clients responded well to treatment. Some variability was noted among substance use groups – namely that cocaine poly-drug users obtained lowest levels of post-treatment reduction in substance use. The implications of such findings are discussed.

The complete study can be found at www.bellwood.ca/education & events/articles.

Celebrating the Freedom of Being Well

2010 Bellwood Alumni & Staff Family BBQ



On June 12th, Bellwood alumni and staff celebrated recovery together at our annual BBQ. Adventure Valley was the site of a day of great food, games, crafts and entertainment by recording artist Slim Williams. Watch your email and the Bellwood web site for the date and details of our 2011 BBQ.



Continuing Care Mini Treatment Programs

Bellwood's **Mini Treatment Programs** provide an excellent opportunity for out-of-town clients to stay connected with Bellwood once they have completed treatment.

2011 Dates

February 20-22 June 19-21

September 25-27 November 20-22

For more information or to register for an upcoming Program, call 1-800-387-6198, Ext 119.

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BELLWOOD ALUMNI

Be the first to learn about upcoming alumni events. If you are not already receiving your continuing care letters and event notices and newsletters via email, contact us to sign up.

Contact jlezcano@bellwood.ca for details.