

A Beckman Consulting Worldwide White Paper



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Is There a Cure to Addiction?

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There is an argument that addiction can be cured. Recently, there was an advertisement released on the television that specifically states that there is a cure to this life-threatening illness. While the author publicly disagrees that addiction is a disease, he also claims that there is a cure even though the word “cure” is specifically assigned to discussions on the pathogenesis of a disease. Promoting a cure to addiction seems to be a mere marketing effort by a major treatment and rehabilitation center in Malibu to possibly cope with or adapt to an economic downturn. Perhaps it’s pure greed. Interestingly, the author of the book being advertised is also the Co-Founder and Co-Director of the Malibu treatment center that is claiming to be a “cure center”. Nonetheless, while there is some valuable information contained in the book specific to areas of self-help, the book is simply a carrot being dangled in front of desperate people affected by addiction.

The premise of the book seems to be this: untangle the past and you won’t ever have the impulse to use drugs or engage in some other addictive behavior. While there is agreement about healing from “underlying causes”, trauma, and lifestyle disorders caused by the disease of addiction, to call the end-state of their treatment episode a “cure” is coldly deceptive. It is only a calculated attempt by an upscale rehab to sell services by confronting the public with a fantastic claim that is nothing more than an astute business strategy. The message from the author is clear: get treatment here, and you’ll be cured. What the author fails to disclose to the public is that holistic recovery from addiction follows months, sometimes years, of customized care for an addict. To boldly dismiss the reality of addiction by claiming there is a cure is reflective of a subculture that believes in making money from the suffering of others and exploiting an addict’s vulnerability and hopelessness, which in many cases is televised or put on the internet by production companies and media giants.

It seems reprehensible to draw vulnerable, hopeless addicts with biopsychosocial disorders (which are either exacerbated or caused by addiction) into a continuum of care predicated on false hope and empty promises. Our team at Beckman Consulting Worldwide (BCW) is dedicated to educating the public about blatant disregard for transparency and violations of ethical codes in the health and human services industry. There is a business side to treatment and from time to time the inability to effectively respond to the marketplace or succumbing to the market forces in the economy causes unethical and unprofessional behavior among those charged with decision-making in our communities. In response, BCW commits its resources to breakthrough approaches in educating and engaging the public about the pervasive nature of addiction and how it can be effectively treated in our communities and society at large. The depth of the problem cannot be solved by a single book claiming there is a cure to the devastating disease of addiction.

Today, our economy is forcing us to reevaluate and realign our values. Accordingly, rather than fall prey to marketing efforts designed to make more money, let’s stay focused on the reality about addiction. BCW embraces a new age of purpose, rather than profit. We market benefits, not unrealistic claims. There is a perverse social equilibrium between tolerance for social predators like drug suppliers, lack of awareness

about the pathogenesis of addiction by those creating the demand, and unwillingness to inject true power into our communities that might reverse the spread of addiction, especially in resource-poor communities where stakeholders can't even afford a \$20 or \$25 book for self-help. This equilibrium is being exploited by Big Business and those who understand the business dynamics behind treatment. The next BCW White Paper, The Addiction Marketplace, is being released on March 31, 2009. It details the supply-demand forces and strategies used by Big Business and other corporate CEOs to exploit opportunities and perpetuate the addiction problem worldwide with blatant disregard for community health and safety across the globe. Figures 1.0 and 1.1 are included in The Addiction Marketplace and demonstrate a direct connection between drug supply, consumer demand, and their effects on public health and safety:

Figure 1.0 – The Problem

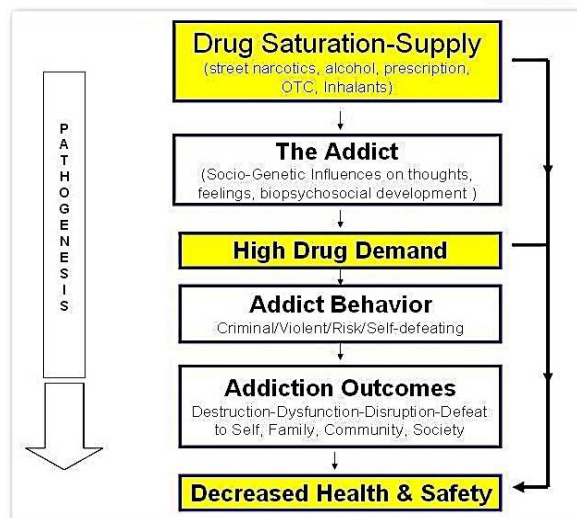
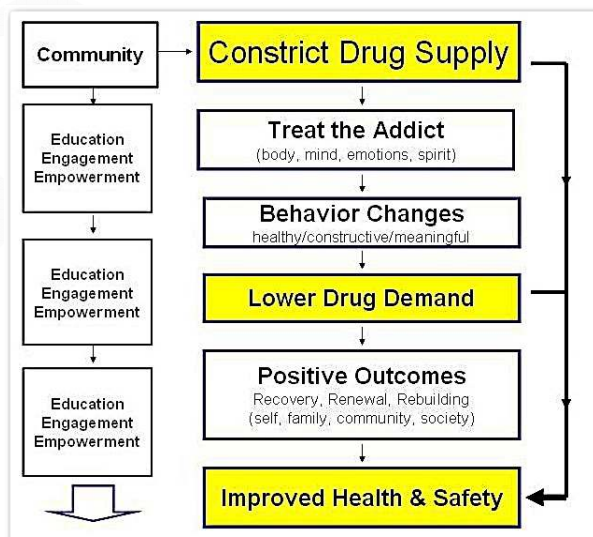


Figure 1.1 – The Solution



The families who are trapped in the dysfunction caused by addiction are extremely vulnerable, and gullible, to exciting claims that addiction can be cured. Many families would do anything to see their child, brother, sister, parent, or friend experience a permanent end to their addiction. Unfortunately, they are being influenced by those who support the trend for making money from vulnerable stakeholders in order to fatten the profit margin and generate a hefty return on shareholder investment. Profit underscores the claim that the biopsychosocial conditions that cause or have been caused by addiction can be permanently solved when they cannot. It's simply unrealistic. In fact, the website promoting this new book specifically states, "we do not believe in the disease concept" [of addiction], yet they use the word "cure" that is generally used to describe a permanent solution or remedy to a disease.

Treatment professionals around the world know that treatment and recovery needs to be, at the minimum, extensive and with no abrupt end. The word "cure" is being **used to trigger hope** and, from a marketing perspective, it's a very clever way to reach an audience: identify the pain, make the claim, and bring it to market. People buy hope every day. Unfortunately in this case, the audience includes the vulnerable addicts and families who are seriously impacted by addiction and unaware of or undereducated about the benefits of treatment and long-term recovery. Our society doesn't need to waste more money on books claiming there is a cure. While certain books sound great and are crafted purposely to grab and convince the reader about a particular theorem or breakthrough solution, the gritty reality is that treatment and long term recovery is a phase of life connecting past addiction and a memorable, meaningful end to our life cycle. We need more funding for treatment centers that focus on purpose rather than profit and actually strengthen individuals, families, and communities through comprehensive treatment and recovery services.

We need more financial support for the treatment centers that maintain a connection to clients post-treatment so that the care continuum extends until the addict can function properly in mainstream society and embrace a lifelong socio-emotional journey without drinking, using, or some other self-defeating addictive behavior. Society is undoubtedly distracted by unscrupulous marketing efforts, televised addiction, and perceptions in the media that are dangerous, inappropriate, and inaccurate. In terms of the book claiming there is a cure to addiction, the author makes it clear that most people cannot afford his exorbitant care continuum often found in affluent communities so he urges consumers to just buy the book and get started there. He claims that if you resolve all of your past issues your future impulses to drink, use, or engage in addictive behaviors will not exist. It simply doesn't work that way. The disease of addiction is more complicated. BCW believes in realistic solutions, not profit, especially when the lives of human beings are at stake. We help treatment centers identify how to extend their care continuum to meet the ongoing needs of a client or patient post-treatment with comprehensive aftercare services that engage and empower the addict, the family, and the community after the treatment episode has ended.

In the book permanent freedom from addiction is promised and discussed in the context of patient success rates. To be clear, success rates for addiction treatment have long been disputed. For example, in a 28-day program many of the addicts who have been admitted for treatment can last 28 days without relapsing and therefore establish a very high “success” rate for completion (sometimes over 80%). Between 28 days and six months, however, the path to long term sobriety can be difficult and the “success” rate declines remarkably. For many high dose, chronic abusers 28 days is merely a relief from the pain and suffering typical in an addict’s life and many eventually relapse because they have prematurely left a supportive environment where they can continue to work on their issues. If 80% of addicts complete a 28 day program, that’s great. However, a heavy percentage of those completing the program eventually relapse because the fundamental principle of treatment exposure was ignored: the longer exposure to treatment results in more positive outcomes (e.g. long-term recovery). Accordingly, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has documented certain fundamental criteria for best practices in treatment for addiction which includes long-range treatment exposure and the following:

- Treatment needs to be readily available
- Remaining in treatment for an adequate period of time is critical for treatment effectiveness
- Recovery from drug addiction can be a long-term process and frequently requires multiple episodes of treatment
- No single treatment is appropriate for everyone
- Effective treatment attends to the multiple needs of the individual, not just the drug use (SAMHSA, 2009)

There are eight other principles for effective treatment but for the purpose of relevance to the book claiming a cure we can use principles advanced by researchers and the treatment communities to defeat a cure theorem that is being used solely to generate profit. A cure implies permanency, which is counter to the principles of effective treatment and ongoing recovery for addicts and their families. Permanency is hard to achieve in the critical areas of a care continuum addressed below:

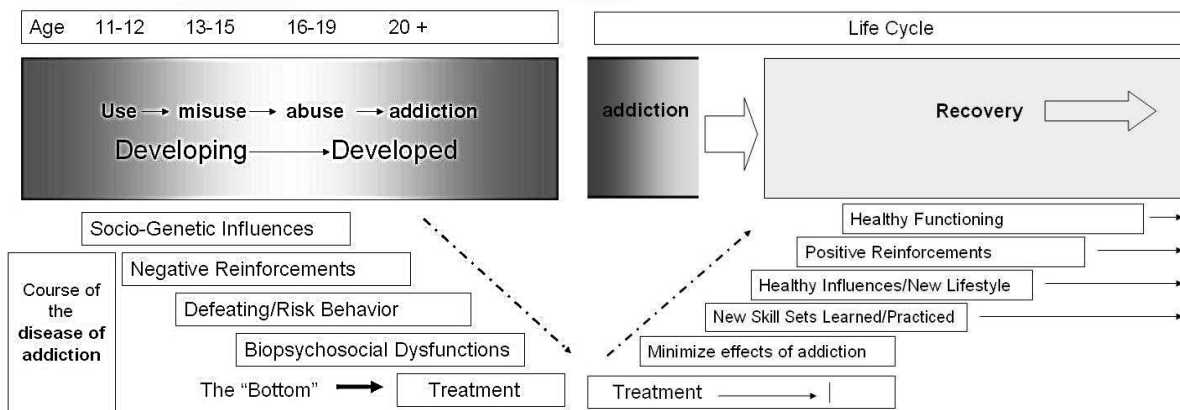
- Biopsychosocial conditions and complications
- Emotional/behavioral conditions and/or complications
- Treatment acceptance & resistance
- Relapse potential
- Recovery environment structure

Interestingly, many rehabs will not disclose the numbers of readmissions. If there is a cure then why is there readmission into treatment centers on a daily basis? Ask treatment centers about relapse rates and the metrics used to evaluate the information. If there is a cure then we can expect a 0% relapse and readmission rate. Long term recovery demands a more extensive stay in a program of longer duration. Accordingly, many 6-month and 1-year programs document lower short-range success numbers but

greater success numbers in terms of long-term sobriety. In six months many addicts discover a unique path in sobriety and commit to long-term sobriety. Unfortunately, even the best programs see a 60-70% relapse rate among their patients, for diverse reasons. Further, 28 day programs cannot detangle, deconstruct, and dissolve the biopsychosocial effects of addiction caused by years of active addiction in a lifestyle full of abuse and dependency. Nor can they cure the corrosive effects of trauma that have deeply scarred the addict physiologically, psychologically, and socially. The key is to help the addict access treatment, stay in the care continuum for an extensive period, reshape their thinking (cognitive restructuring), and build their ability to rationally process feelings so that any action, including decision-making, will result in a positive outcome.

Instead of promoting a cure, BCW remains focused on innovative treatment and intervention protocols and heightening the public awareness that the cycle of addiction can be broken but the addict's recovery spans the remaining life cycle (See Figure 1.2). The key is to give the public multiple approaches to dealing with addiction rather than announcing that there is simply a cure. To date, there is no solution that abruptly ends addiction. Pharma companies and certain treatment centers will disagree and promote their product or service with disregard for future, dangerous impact on the consumer. Both claim a breakthrough product or service and mislead the public about fundamental solutions in addiction treatment. If a book claims something that is counter to established best treatment practices and ethical conduct, then there is a risk of negative long-range effects on the consumer. The underlying urgency in their claim is attractive to those who need help immediately. However, we believe in being transparent. BCW promotes long-range treatment and aftercare and will never endorse any marketing effort that invariably dissuades or deters people from accessing treatment.

Figure 1.2



After years of treating and rehabilitating clients addicted to drugs, sex, gambling, eating, and spending I forged a hybrid model of treatment that not only blends the two camps – disease model of addiction and behaviorists – into one, but also eliminates the cure theorem. Pathology of addiction requires treatment and aftercare in each

biopsychosocial level. The notion of a cure suggests to stakeholders that at some point the obsessive-compulsive disorders, addictive behaviors, physiological/neurological damage, spiritual corruption, and psychological disorders cease as if the proposed pathogen (in this case, addiction) is eliminated much like a bacterial infection is cured with antibiotics. Further, while valuable combination therapies are available there is currently no cure for long-term, permanent effects of addiction on the body and mind (e.g. anhedonia, excitatory neurotoxicity). Where does the cure theorem fit here?

Treatment for addiction is ongoing and recovery from the trauma and lasting effects of long-term addiction lifelong. In fact, many of the treatment centers endorsing the cure theorem are actually doing business as usual; however, their marketing drive includes promoting a disguised, contemporary opinion in a niche market that does nothing more than blend inaccuracy with malfeasance with the primary focus on increasing profits. In other words, they are dangling a carrot in front of desperate people to make money. Their care continuum includes very similar approaches and therapies that most treatment centers use (whether they are exclusive high-end or County-funded “last house on the block” types), including individual and group counseling and therapy, spiritual renewal exercises, physical health activities, family reunification groups, and re-socialization techniques that facilitate an immersion and acceptance into new groups and circles of peers and fellow recovering addicts in mainstream society. Many prospective clients and family members misled by highly educated marketers (who know how undereducated the public is about addiction and what the hooks are for selling) simply hope for one thing: to be cured and permanently relieved from the pain that the disease of addiction is causing, whether it is specific to the pain within the addict or the emotional pain of a family member or friend who is watching a loved one commit self-murder with drugs & alcohol or some form of addictive behavior.

Using drugs and other behaviors to numb, escape, and provide a positive stimulus in the limbic center not otherwise attained characterizes the disease of addiction. There is no cure for such an invasive disease no more than there is a cure to cancer, diabetes, or AIDS. Each require a medical intervention, treatment, and post-treatment monitoring or some form of aftercare for extended periods of time, usually for the entire lifecycle. Consider a heart disease patient who is diagnosed and receives medical intervention and treatment for the condition. The patient is instructed to change behaviors (eating, smoking, not resting), have symptoms monitored, and actively engage in new, healthy forms of activities (stress management, relaxation, etc). The same is true for addicts. They’re diagnosed, receive treatment, learn how to change their behavior, and engage in a new lifestyle rich in positive choice and action. There is no cure to addiction but rather a life-changing recovery from the disease over time.

A holistic approach with combination therapies, medical supervision, spiritual guidance, and ongoing psychological assessment can deliver a recovering addict from the pain and suffering and can help restore their lives with health, rationale, and balance. Effective treatment also includes educating the addict about limbic center pay off and how to naturally trigger our reward center in our brain in the absence of toxic chemicals. Ongoing commitment to recovery-oriented behavior and thinking is necessary. There is

no cure to addiction. As a treatment professional, I wish we did have a cure so that people can stop dying in their addiction or going to prison or ending up in some other institution, including the streets in our communities. In each case, families are torn apart and left bankrupt. Children are left without parents and parents all too often have to mourn the death of their child because of an overdose, murder, or suicide. The disease of addiction ruins and kills. There is, however, hope. Contact us and we'll give that hope to you, free of charge.

Recovery from addiction is clearly a time of renewal, not a place of doom that some affluent rehabs have characterized it as. BCW strongly believes in treatment innovation, shifting paradigms to properly advance solutions (not cures) and optimizing resources so that we can collectively minimize the spread of addiction. Most importantly, we accurately present to those around the world how invasive, destructive, and powerful the disease of addiction is through science, medicine, and each layer of health and human services. Further, our futures-thinking drives our belief in continuous improvements in treating addiction and advancing the holistic benefits of 12 Step Philosophy-based programs of renewal and hope in recovery. We do NOT believe in dismissing decades of arduous and promising work in the scientific, medical, social work, and all human services disciplines by introducing a book and a claim used specifically to market an exclusive rehabilitation center that cannot cure something as invisible and insidious as addiction.

Recently, I published a book describing the absolute devastation that addiction had in my life. **"Hug me, My Daddy's not a drug addict"** includes the story of a painful and unforgettable rise from the lowest point in my life when I was homeless and addicted to meth, cocaine, alcohol, and marijuana. For 13 years the disease of addiction progressed, became chronic, and nearly resulted in my death. The book describes my gratitude and journey in sobriety and was written to give real hope to individuals and families that recovery is possible. It is not a marketing tool and was not written for profit. In fact, 100% of earnings are used directly for the growth and development of a youth destiny program called The Future Element. I hope that my decision to use the earnings in this way might serve as a blueprint for a new social responsibility among those who have the power to influence the public.

My journey in recovery began because I was at the "bottom" and someone reached their hand out to me in treatment. They didn't have a book claiming that if I completed their program I would be cured for life. They had a treatment program that empowered me through education, awareness, and action. I found a freedom and renewal through practicing new principles and found recovery from the trauma and hopeless state of mind and body while embracing a true discovery of my past and present issues through counseling, therapy, and lifelong vigilance about the cunning, baffling, and powerful nature of addiction. The incremental changes toward healthier functioning and spiritual renewal happened because I was taught about a balance between body, mind, emotions, and spirit over time. Wherever an addict finds that balance, so be it. It doesn't matter if they find the balance in an exclusive rehab by the beach or a county-funded social model program in Sun Valley. My responsibility as a treatment

professional and business developer includes educating, engaging, and empowering stakeholders in all layers of our society so that their experience coping with addiction is buttressed by the depth and weight of treatment and recovery solutions and resources discovered by our team at Beckman Consulting Worldwide.

For the price of the “cure” book being promoted, I’ll sit with you, identify your needs, and help you discover and design an approach to your problem or dilemma with addiction, whether you’re an addict or the family, friend, employer, or co-worker of the addict. And if you can’t afford that, we’ll sit with you free of charge. Our team will not give you false hope that there is an immediate and permanent solution to the disease of addiction. What we’ll give you is a realistic approach that is rich in resources for greater education and awareness so that decision-making can actually help you or a loved one in the short and long-term rather than unnecessarily prolong the inevitable passage into treatment and long-term recovery because of distracting media, incredulous claims, and exploitation by Big Business.

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Eradicating Addiction