

ABOUT A.A.

...a newsletter for professional men and women

Spring 1981

A.A. Sponsorship Adapted to Education of Medical Students

After only three years of operation, a Philadelphia-based program of one-to-one "sponsoring" of medical students by A.A. members is in full swing. Last year, the number of student visits to open A.A. meetings totaled 500. Students gain firsthand knowledge of how A.A. works through actual attendance at a meeting and from sponsors, who serve as guides, answering questions based on their personal experience as recovering alcoholics. A report on this program notes: "The impact of attending an . . . open meeting is light years ahead of having an A.A. member, however articulate, address a class. This program reveals A.A. in action and questions that may arise for the student can be answered in the clarifying context of a meeting."

Origins of the program. The idea of this program originated at Georgetown University Medical School in Washington, D.C. After a thorough and encouraging study of its feasibility, the Philadelphia A.A. Intergroup Committee began a similar program. As a result of monthly meetings of A.A.'s and medical people from nearby institutions, guidelines were developed for the use of A.A. members escorting students to meetings, to insure that the time spent was unpressured but productive.

With the help of a physician who was a career teacher in alcoholism, it was possible to show the medical community how the program could meet their needs.

Because the Philadelphia area has five teaching medical colleges, reaching these schools became a top priority, and friends of A.A. at some proved a great asset. The schools made up lists of students and A.A. provided the sponsors.

Explaining sponsorship. In A.A., sponsorship is the means by which the newcomer is guided to understand and use the A.A. program. A member with some experience in staying sober provides this service. The success of sponsorship within A.A. suggested that the concept could be applied to carrying A.A.'s message to students. One of the reasons it works so well

is that sponsorship is more a shared experience than a formal teacher-student one.

The program at work. The A.A. sponsor contacts the student and arranges to get together. Using a two-part postcard, the sponsor reports to intergroup, since attendance is required by the school and the student's presence at a meeting has to be a matter of record.

Georgetown's experience and program. Georgetown considered formal means of educating medical students about alcoholism "satisfactory, but hardly to be enthusiastically endorsed." However, concerning the A.A. effort, Georgetown reported: ". . . using the A.A. sponsorship system . . . the quality of the relationship was what determined the positive results. . . ."

Simple method works. The success of the Philadelphia program may be attributed to the wholehearted cooperation of the medical education community, the enthusiasm and dedication of the many A.A. committees, the use of the sponsorship concept, and the essential simplicity with which the program was designed.

Georgetown U. Offers Three-Part Alcohol Education Program

Georgetown University's "Program in Alcohol Education" is designed to "confront the basic negativism with which most people approach alcoholism," a situation which Georgetown considers "more serious among members of the medical profession, because of the critically important role the physician should play in the care of the alcoholic."

The Medical Center has evolved a three-part program, implemented during three years of the doctors' education:

First year. Attendance at A.A. meetings and a seminar discussion of alcoholism.

Second year. Attendance at a two and one-half hour panel presentation, and a question-and-answer period with five recovering alcoholics who are also M.D.'s.

Senior year. Attendance at four one-hour seminars on addiction.

The student-sponsorship system described earlier is used with first-year students. The second year's program was originated by a medical student who is a recovering alcoholic. The panel of alcoholic physicians were informative and the Center's report noted: "The extent of alcoholism in the medical profession came as a surprise to most students." The Senior year's seminar on addiction is a series of four one-hour sessions offering specifics on confrontation, referral, detoxification, medication, role of A.A. and Al-Anon, and the use of Antabuse.

The entire program is a core curriculum for all 200 students in each medical class.

Three N.Y.C. Medical Schools Use A.A. Meetings as Educational Resource

Three New York City medical schools have devised a way of using A.A. meetings to show medical students how A.A. helps the recovering alcoholic and how physicians refer patients to A.A.

Albert Einstein College of Medicine students attend A.A. meetings as part of their training.

Students at *Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons* now attend two local A.A. group meetings as part of their six-week course in clinical psychiatry.

Cornell Medical Center's New York Hospital regularly schedules A.A. speakers to talk to third-year students, every five to six weeks. Results were so good that Dr. Millman of Cornell says: "We began to require students to attend A.A. meetings to see for themselves how it works."

Helping Companies With Problem Drinkers

Practical measures are available to help organizations understand and deal with alcoholism. Although A.A. does not give professional advice, members offer to share their experience with the process of recovery from alcoholism through the following activities:
— Presentation of public information meetings to describe A.A. to employees.

— Informal meetings with union, management, medical, and personnel people to determine how A.A. can help.

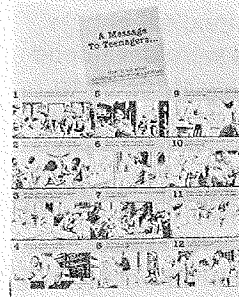
— Escorting employees who want help to A.A. meetings.

Organizations specifically set up to offer services concerning employee alcoholism programs include the National Council on Alcoholism, the Association of Labor-Management Administrators and Consultants on Alcoholism, and the Occupational Division of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. A.A. is not affiliated with these organizations, but can act as a community resource.

Leaflets for Teenagers and for Newcomers Now Available

The new leaflet "A Newcomer Asks . . ." provides short, clear answers to questions most commonly asked by the newcomer to A.A., such as: "If I go to an A.A. meeting, does that commit me to anything?" and "How do I join A.A.?" The enclosed copy is for your information. Although priced at 10¢ apiece, we will be happy to send up to ten copies free, upon request.

"A Message to Teenagers . . ." illustrates 12 questions about drinking habits.



A "yes" answer to any of them suggests: "Maybe it's time you took a serious look at what your drinking might be doing to you." The pamphlet is intended primarily for use by A.A. speakers with school audiences. Copies are available in limited quantities upon request.

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SOBRIETY CENSUS IN NEXT ISSUE

Last summer, the fifth survey of A.A. members — a "sobriety census" — was conducted under the auspices of A.A.'s General Service Board, and the results of this triennial survey are planned for publication in the next issue of *About A.A.*