

SerenesScene

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RECOVERY INVESTMENT - A LOOK AT THE NUMBERS

By Andrew T. Martin, MBA, CADC II, SAP, CA-CCS

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) reports that an estimated 22.2 million people age 12 and older are classified with substance dependence or abuse in 2012. The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) estimates that substance use and addiction costs the society of the United States \$559 billion per year with \$366 billion attributed to illegal drugs and alcohol. These costs are derived from direct costs such as incarceration of criminals that burglarize and sell illicit drug to support their addiction. The Justice Policy Institute reports the average cost of incarceration for a low level criminal for two years as \$64,338. The report further states that providing two years of direct treatment services costs \$32,974. The report does not address symptomatic treatment costs associated with drugs and alcohol such as health related problems and mental illness. SAMHSA reports 88% of patients in treatment for addiction

have a co-occurring disorder.

Indirect costs to society include loss of productivity and employee turnover. SAMHSA reports replacing a worker who is terminated due to addiction problems can cost 25% to 200% of their annual compensation, depending on their job duties. Industrial accidents and fatalities also have a significant impact as the National Business Group on Health discovered in their 2009 report in which up to 40% of industrial fatalities and 47% of industrial injuries involved alcohol use. Additionally, the report stated that employees who use drugs are five times more likely to file a worker's compensation claim. The United States Department of Health and Human Services reports the lost productivity due to absenteeism and poor job performance of the American workforce related to illicit drug use is estimated at \$129 billion per year.

Unfortunately, the costs attributed to addiction do not end there. Perhaps the greater costs are associated with the family and the individual with the substance use disorder. A Med Care study reports each family member of an addict spends an additional \$433-\$490 per year on medical care than their peers. Ailments caused by additional stress, emotional instability, and fatigue likely account for the increased expense. However, financial costs do not begin to explain the additional impact that addiction has within the family system.

The emotional impact on the family system is significant. Depending on the culture of the family, there can be a loss of respect from peers within the community. There is certainly a loss of respect within the family system as the roles of each family member encounter turmoil and mistakes are made. The stress of a serious illness such as substance dependence reach far beyond the addict and take a toll on everyone around the addict. Loss of sleep, depression, poor eating habits, constant worry or numbness all seriously degrade the quality of life of the family members.

If the family tries to intervene on the addict, there are additional expenses associated with interventions which can range from \$500 to \$5000. Eventually there are legal expenses incurred as well. Quite often DUI's or jail are the result of substance use by the addict. Many families will spend tens of thousands of dollars paying for attorneys and bailing out their loved ones only to find them back in jail in the future.

For the addict, the individual costs associated with the disease are the greatest. Because addiction is a chronic and progressive disease, the costs only get worse as long as treatment is not received or is ineffective. The first costs experiences are often associated with the loss of friends and family who no longer wish to put up with the acting out and embarrassment of the addict. This type of loss is often associated with a lack of self-respect which continues into a lack of respect for others. The use of mood altering addictive substance impacts health in many ways and deteriorates the vital organs of the body quickly. Finances are impacted as the addict must continue to spend increasingly higher amounts to support the disease. Soon, job loss is exper-

rienced due to poor performance and attendance, and financial problems increase. Stress, shame, and changes in thinking and feeling cause mental illness to set in. Soon the addict may resort to criminal activity to support their need for escape from reality. With crime comes incarceration and loss of freedom. Quality of life can get very low indeed.



Investment

The investments made toward treating addiction can be quantified in many ways. The financial impact to society is perhaps the most telling. The National Institute of Health reports that only 4% of the total addiction attributed social costs to the United States is spent on treatment of the disease. SAMHSA reports that 77% of the costs of treatment are paid for through government programs and only 23% are paid for by the private sector with only 8% being paid out-of-pocket: this represents only 10% of individuals acknowledging the need for treatment actually receiving treatment. Considering that aftercare and continued care programs are not government funded, and few insurance providers will reimburse for aftercare or continued care, the amount of money being channeled to these services is very small.

Investment is not confined to finances: a tremendous amount of effort goes into recovery as well. For the recovering individual, the investment into treatment is

extreme. Primary treatment requires the individual to assess and contemplate feelings and behaviors that the individual heretofore has gone to incredible lengths to avoid. Treatment upsets the fundamental behaviors of the addict and makes a request of the Patient to replace those behaviors with a conscious decision to make better choices. These behavioral changes are rooted in several Patient dynamics. Clinically the Patient has to understand the difference between a distorted view of the world around them and the reality. Additionally, they have to understand the distorted emotions they are feeling and the reality of the circumstances creating the emotions. Physically, their bodies need to mend and their brains need to find homeostasis. Socially, then need to find fellowship and support in people that are also in a journey of recovery. Finally, they need to find a spiritual solution for the hole in their hearts and souls.

Ideally, the family system also invests in recovery. Addiction is most definitely a disease with significant family impact, and significant effort is required to reconstruct a functional family system. Family treatment is an invaluable experience for the immediate family system. It is through treatment that the family members discover how their own behaviors have been impacted by the addict's behaviors. Treatment also prepares the family members for the behavioral changes necessary within the family system. The investment by family members to make those behavioral changes will result in an improved quality of life for all involved.

Perhaps the largest investment into recovery is the time devoted. Starting with intervention on the individual with the addiction, the time invested into a thorough recovery continuum of care can seem extreme. It is recommended that the addict invest a minimum of twelve months travelling through the continuum of care which includes detoxification, primary treatment, after-care treatment, transitional sober living, and sober living. Each of these phases of treatment brings further growth and understanding in addition to the substitution of unwanted behaviors with healthy behaviors. Patience is difficult in recovery, but is an absolute necessity.

It can be especially difficult when the recovering addict

encounters relapse episodes. Often hope and expectations dwindle due to a relapse. However, perseverance does pay off in the end. Statistics show that the average number of relapse episodes is six before the addict finds long-term recovery. Some will never relapse, and some will relapse numerous times; and as long as the addict is motivated for recovery success will eventually come.

Most recovering people will also include some form of self-help meetings into the lifestyle. Self-help meetings play a very important part in creating fellowship and support that is difficult to find anywhere else. These meetings take significant time, perhaps upwards of five hours per week, and may last a lifetime. This is one of the common lifestyle changes of a recovering person. Others include spiritual time, contemplative time, time with hobbies, time with family, and time alone. A balanced approach to living life is often the result of the recovery work performed by the recovering person.



Return on Investment

The RAND Drug Policy Research Center discovered that every dollar invested into treating addiction returns \$7.46 in societal costs. SAMHSA reports that societal savings can exceed a ratio of 12:1 when healthcare costs are included in the statistical research. The Journal of Quantitative Criminology reported a savings of \$19,000 per patient in crime-related costs in the year following the treatment of addicted criminals. Considering that SAMHSA reports the average cost of treatment is about \$4,600 per patient, the numbers seem to

clearly indicate that treatment has an overwhelmingly positive impact on society as a whole.

Productivity is also improved greatly, as a study cited in the Journal of the American Medical Association indicated that 69% of patients with addictions-related medical conditions who received health care as part of the addiction treatment program were abstinent 6 months after leaving treatment. The findings are somewhat similar to the ADAT-DUI Outcome Evaluation study which cited over 63% being abstinent following treatment, and over 51% remaining abstinent at follow-up.

Return on investment for the family system is similarly impressive when one considers the emotional impact of recovery. The respect restored when behaviors change within the family system is immeasurable. Health issues are reduced significantly and the worry and anxiety is replaced with productivity and purpose. Bonds are rebuilt within the family, and often faith and hope is reborn.

The financial bleeding associated with the addiction also stops with long-term recovery. As the recovering person gains employment, the strain on the family purse lessons. With continued recovery and productivity, the financial health of the recovering person blossoms and stabilizes, and the reliance on the family for supplemental finances comes to an end.

Individual return on investment is the most impressive. The lifetime improvement in physical and mental health is inestimable. The recovering person finds substantive friendships that are lasting and loving, and family relationships become functional. The recovering person removes themselves from relationship drama, and discontinues taking on other people's problems as their own. They learn to take care of their own lives and thrive. Self-respect returns to the recovering person, and with that comes respect for others as well. With new found freedom, the recovering individual finds a career path and the commensurate financial gain.

Overall quality of life improves with recovery, and a sense of fulfillment, joy and love are experienced once again.

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Andrew Martin began his entrepreneurial approach to business in 1982 at the age of fifteen. Throughout his career, Andrew has fulfilled his duties as a senior executive in viable business ventures in various industries including; health care, sound reinforcement and lighting, electrical safety equipment, commercial catering, specialty metal

shapes manufacturing, and the entertainment overhead suspension industry.

Andrew's current business efforts are encompassed by Serene Recovery Network, a group of branded organizations with a common vision of helping people in early recovery to help themselves to a long-term rewarding quality of life without addiction. The individual businesses include Serene Center, a 36 bed transitional sober living facility in Long Beach, CA which also conducts outpatient counseling services, drug testing and monitoring, and outpatient detoxification. Serene Connections, a publishing and professional educational conference production company catering to the field of addiction treatment. Serene Directory, an online directory of professionals and organizations affiliated with behavioral and mental health. Serene Foundation, a micro loan lender providing funding for the continuum of addiction care.

Andrew has authored many articles related to addiction treatment, health care agency productivity, industry specialties, as well as business approach and leadership and has been published in Serene Scene, Behavioral Health, Freedom Newspaper, Sound & Video Contractor, Western Wall and Ceiling Contractors Association Bulletin, Connections Magazine (Australia), dB Magazine, EQ, Lighting & Sound International (Canada), Sound & Communications, Live Sound International (UK), Recording-Engineering-Production. Additionally, many patents and trademarks have been awarded to Andrew Martin for various business related products, brand names, and service marks.

Andrew is also very active in the California Association of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Counselors (CAADAC) Board of Directors and Sober Living Network. Andrew also keynotes for many organizations.