

## CLINICAL UPDATE: MAT LATEST

by Stephen Shapiro, MD  
SCI Medical Director



There is much discussion today regarding the heroin crisis in New York State and across our country. The epidemic of deaths from opioid medications is climbing to new heights. More than 28,000 people died in 2014 from narcotic overdoses. Here at St. Christopher's, we too often see the "sad news" of a brother who has succumbed and left us forever.

New York State is acutely aware of the problem. It has proposed a 3 pronged plan: stop the supply and the dealers; educate the medical community, and provide more money for treatment. The state and the American Board of Addiction Medicine advocate the use of "MAT"—medication-assisted treatment.

For the treatment of opiate dependence, methadone is the prototype medication. There are many years of success and vast studies of its effectiveness.

More recently, buprenorphine, alone and in combination with naltrexone (suboxone), have been shown to be effective treatments. We use suboxone for detoxification here at SCI with great success. Many of our patients come to us from detox units or home on suboxone maintenance.

The problem with these narcotic treatment medications is that they are very addictive. Tolerance develops, and there is a certain euphoria associated with their use. There is a street market value for these drugs. Often they only substitute for heroin when a supply runs out. On the other hand, when the supply of suboxone or methadone runs out, the addict has only one choice—to restart their heroin dependence.

A newer, more clever, treatment for maintenance is the monthly injection of naltrexone. This opiate blocker (Vivitrol) floods the narcotic receptors in the brain. It takes away the craving to use; any attempted use would be totally blocked. Thus, no "high". Naltrexone is not a narcotic, so there is no withdrawal. Along with counseling and 12-Step program, Vivitrol has been shown to be an effective aid in early recovery. Vivitrol is given as an intramuscular injection every 28 days. There is also a pill form of naltrexone called ReVia, useful in opiate and alcohol addiction.

We are getting very positive feedback from our men here. The follow-up letters from them are encouraging. They have no craving to use, and are pursuing treatment successfully.

Campral and antabuse are further medications available for the treatment of alcohol dependence.

Medication Assisted Treatment is an important part of the future of addiction treatment. It is not a cure, but plays an important role. We are in the forefront here at St. Christopher's in helping our men to succeed.

*(Spotlight on the Board - continued from previous page)*

Valerie plays an active role in many organizations. She is a Trustee Emeritus of the College of St. Vincent in Riverdale, Honorary Chair of FOA's Sharing Hope Celebration Dinner; serves on the Advisory Board of the Little Sisters of the Poor (Jeanne Jugan Residence), Committee Member of the Sisters of Life Dinner; serves with the Archdiocese of New York as Campaign Secretary for Renew + Rebuild, and is Honorary Chair of the Catholic Guardian Society Dinner. Valerie is a Dame of Malta and a Lady of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem.

Valerie was awarded the Medal of the Venerable Cross Pro Ecclesia at Pontifice for outstanding and noble works by Pope John Paul II. She is also a recipient of the Graymoor Award for Community Service, the College of Mount Saint Vincent's St. Vincent de Paul Award, The St. Nicholas Award at the Cardinal's Annual Christmas Luncheon, and the Child of Peace Award from the Catholic Guardian Society.

After several years' hiatus, Valerie rejoined the St. Christopher's Inn Board in 2015 and is pleased to now work with Fr. Bill Drobach, SA, President & CEO, and Marianne Taylor-Rhoades, COO, who she says have taken the Inn to new levels, while maintaining its time-honored traditions both of high clinical standards of healing, as well as healing the human spirit.

Valerie has four children, two of whom live in the area and two live in Colorado. She has ten grandchildren. She and her family are deeply involved in philanthropy through the Charles A. Mastronardi Foundation. Valerie currently serves as Vice-President of the Foundation, which supports good works in the metro New York area and beyond.

St. Christopher's Inn is pleased and honored to feature Valerie Mastronardi in its new "Spotlight on the SCI Board" section.

## PEEKSKILL ROTARY CLUB: TRUE COMPASSION

by Marianne Taylor-Rhoades, COO

As the Heroin Crisis continues to grow in the Hudson Valley and throughout our nation, the Peekskill Rotary Club reached out to St. Christopher's Inn for information, and to see how they could help. I was honored to be invited to speak at their meeting to talk about The Inn, who we are, what we do, and our successes and challenges. Here are some of the basic facts shared.

According to The Journal News, opioid deaths increased in the lower Hudson Valley as young people are turning to heroin as a cheaper alternative to other drugs. Indeed, the heroin deaths among people under age 35 hit 313 in 2013 — nearly triple the number in 2009. Among those deaths, 103 of them were people aged 15-24. Westchester County had 460 opioid deaths from 2003 through 2014, up 61 percent between 2009 and 2014; the records showed, Rockland County — had a 56 percent increase to a total of 98 opioid-related deaths since 2003.

At St. Christopher's Inn, our unique approach to holistic treatment and housing for our men is what makes us so successful, but is also our biggest challenge. The men live here in the shelter completely free of charge at the generosity of the Franciscan Friars of Atonement, while they are receiving chemical dependency treatment and primary health care.

I shared that one of the most compelling facts about St. Christopher's Inn in recent years is that our clients are young. Staying active and working on becoming healthy is an important part of recovery for these young men, but providing opportunities for physical exercise in limited space is a challenge. After visiting the Inn and speaking with some of our clients, then president, Ron Worth, presented Fr. Bill Drobach, SA, and me with a check to purchase four exercise bicycles on behalf of the Peekskill Rotary Club! Our men were so grateful and make use of these bikes every day, but the support did not end there.

On June 9, 2016, Fr. Bill and I were invited back to the Peekskill Rotary meeting. This time the group presented us with a \$15,000.00 check to pay for scholarships for men with no other resources for treatment. Their commitment to support St. Christopher's Inn, the men we serve, and to help fight the disease of addiction demonstrates true compassion.