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AN ETHICAL VIEW OF ADDICTION AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Donald Patthoff*

**American College of Dentists - Private Dental Practice, Martinsburg, WV – USA American College of Dentists - Private Dental Practice, Martinsburg, WV – USA*

Dr. Don Patthoff is a general dentist in Martinsburg; he was a clinical dentist, director of the GPR, and a principle investigator at the Martinsburg VA 1974-83. He is a past-president WV Dental Association and ASDE, an ethics consultant to the ADA, and is a fellow of the ACD and AGD. Dr. Patthoff authors a column in AGD's Impact and was editor, Journal of the Academy of Laser Dentistry. He chairs ethics committees of City Hospital and ALD, is president, George Washington Institute of Living Ethics, and serves the Professional Ethics Initiative - a collaborative of ADA, ADEA, ACD, and ASDE. He is a board member of IDEALS.

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Addictions and ethics are complex. As information increases about both additional sets of ethical decisions are being raised. The underlying ethics of addictions however is rarely explored. This paper aims to re-present a brief interactive session offered to the IDEALS Congress in Leuven. If addictions, on one hand, are sometimes considered “bad habits,” then ethics/morality, on the other, can also be understood as virtues or “good habits.”

Ethics as an actual intervention tool - and not limited simply to ways of clarifying which of the traditional and newer interventions should be used under various circumstances – may need, then, more focused deliberations. The bases for this presentation was first introduced through a three part series in a regular AGD Impact column – a newsmagazine for American general dentists.^{1,2,3}

It is my expectation that introducing this notion to an international audience might confirm some of Dr. Ozar's and my basic suppositions about treating patients with addictions and, perhaps, generate new insights into the ethics of addiction interventions – especially under the theme of restorative justice. Key to this discussion is a notion that addiction involves patients who are both fully capable yet, at the same time, also fully incapable regarding a specific matter at hand. Another notion regards our understanding of stigma and that addictions are both a personal and a public health issue. Based on a case presentation, these notions are further explored within the context of the individual Chairside doctor patient relationship and demonstrate that to begin addressing this complex issue, accurate clinical and ethical diagnoses must be established if the dentist wishes to maintain a professional ethics relationship with the patient and society.

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