

## DESCRIBING CRACK'S TERRIBLE GRIP

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By the time 21-year-old Jackie tried to give up smoking crack, she had already lost her family, her unborn baby, and her sense of self.

"My life was in a shambles. I can't even begin to explain it to you," she tearfully told an audience of more than 100 that gathered in Hackensack last night to learn about crack.

Mostly parents, they also listened to various drug experts describe the staggering proportions of the crack epidemic across the country. A powerful and cheap derivative of cocaine, crack can turn a teen-ager into an addict in one afternoon, said the experts.

Jackie said crack and cocaine drove her to steal as much as \$200 daily from the cash register at the store where she worked as a cashier. The dimensions of her addiction also included a near-fatal car accident and physical abuse from a boyfriend.

Medical and drug-treatment experts told a packed audience in the county freeholder chambers that an estimated 25 million Americans have tried cocaine, as many as 8 million use it, and perhaps 2 million are addicted to it.

"There is an American thirst for drugs that will make it through any law enforcement agency," said Rep. Robert G. Torricelli, D-Hackensack, who sponsored the forum. "It is that thirst we have to end. "

Battling crack abuse is a particularly difficult challenge because it is increasingly available and relatively cheap, said the experts. Crack "is something easily obtainable on lunch money," noted Dr. Martin Carlton, clinical director of psychiatry at Bergen Pines County Hospital.

What makes crack so inexpensive and extremely addictive, experts explained, is its form. Crack is cocaine that has been reduced to its base state, and is smokable in very small amounts. A vial of the porcelainlike substance, which weighs from one tenth to one fourteenth of a gram, costs \$10 to \$14 in New Jersey.

Although the speakers noted that education is the first step in stemming drug abuse, few other solutions were offered at the meeting. **But Miller Newton, clinical director of KIDS of Bergen County, a substance abuse treatment program in Hackensack, said no teen-agers begin their drug experimentation with crack. Newton noted that "crack isn't the cause" of drug abuse.**

**"It's the final cap on the threat," he said.**

**Newton said teen-agers still begin using drugs the way they always have by smoking marijuana and drinking alcohol.**

**The Bergen County prosecutor is investigating allegations of abuses at KIDS, which is known for its controversial and authoritarian methods of treatment.**

The experts also dispelled the notion that drug abuse can be cured by stopping the habit.

"We're challenging the idea that alcohol and drug addiction can be resolved simply through will power," said Manuel Fonseca, director of the CARE program, a drug treatment project at Holy Name Hospital in Teaneck. "It's not a habit; it's an illness, a disease. "

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## DRUG THERAPY BUSINESS BOOMS

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- Correction: CORRECTION - Future Health Systems Inc. of Summit and Paramus charges about \$5,000 for eight months of drug-abuse treatment, not eight weeks, as reported last week. (PUBLISHED TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 1986, page a03, all editions)

Ten years ago, Phil Henricks was incapable of holding down a job as a cook, so clouded was his life with heroin, cocaine, pills, and whiskey.

Today, the former addict owns a business that counsels teen-age drug abusers and their families. For a fee of between \$5,000 and \$7,000, Henricks coaxes and spars with clients through six months of intensive, soul-wrenching therapy that promises to snuff out their addiction.

Outside the Ridgewood office of his firm, the Furman Clinic, Henricks engages in another kind of battle. It is a fight for a larger slice of the turf with a small, but growing, number of entrepreneurs who have entered the drug treatment business.

Not only do these new businesses vie for clients, they're competing with the traditional providers of drug treatment hospitals.

"The competition with the hospitals for our kind of business is pretty fierce; that's just what business is all about," said Kathy Stuckey, coowner of Future Health Systems Inc., a two-year-old drug treatment company that operates four programs in Bergen and Union counties.

These entrepreneurs aren't setting up shop just anywhere. Affluent Bergen County is the backdrop for a number of success stories.

Four private drug counseling programs have sprung up in the last three years. They treat almost 1,000 patients among them.

There are no private, for-profit treatment programs in Passaic County. Experts believe that the programs have not caught on in Passaic County because residents are generally less affluent than their Bergen County neighbors.

Private drug treatment centers owe much of their success to the growing numbers of middle-class families affected by drug abuse. And though insurance coverage for drug treatment is still spotty, the programs are gaining acceptance among insurers disillusioned with the high cost of hospital care.

For example, the average cost of eight weeks of outpatient treatment at Future Health Systems in the Union County community of Summit is \$5,000. By contrast, eight weeks of inpatient treatment at Fair Oaks, a private, for-profit psychiatric hospital also in Summit, costs almost \$40,000.

Despite the healthy competition, the proliferation of private drug treatment clinics could have some bad side effects.

"What we have is a healthy trend in that services are available, but there is a danger in that people who don't have the capacity to pay may get lost in the shuffle," said Bob Bedell, Bergen County alcoholism coordinator.

About 4,000 New Jerseyans have been turned away from publicly funded treatment programs because of overcrowding, said Richard Russo, assistant commissioner of the N.J. Department of Health.

Largely uninsured and poor, these clients also are not good candidates for treatment in private programs, which depend on a "reservoir of paying clients," Russo said.

"Some of those 4,000 are falling pretty far through the cracks," Russo said. "These people are, by and large, the disenfranchised folks," who are likely to end up "back on the streets, in jail, the emergency room, or the morgue. "

He said the capacity of drug treatment programs statewide needs to double to meet current demand. About 7,000 people are now in public drug and alcohol treatment programs in New Jersey.

Private for-profit and nonprofit programs spend large sums of money on marketing their services, however, and contend they do not turn away clients unable to pay. They claim to admit some people at nominal or no charge.

Because they don't rely on public funds, private programs "have to go out and drum up trade," said Russo.

Henricks, who a year ago started the for-profit Furman Clinic in Ridgewood, has spent about \$50,000 on marketing and public relations. Henricks, who is a government-certified substance abuse counselor, worked for a couple of years in public rehabilitation centers in the Midwest before starting his own company.

Future Health Systems has a marketing staff of five.

Despite their modern approach to marketing which includes radio spots, glossy media kits, and the hiring of public relations firms several programs said they did not undertake market research before putting out the welcome mat.

One such clinic, Hackensack-based KIDS of Bergen, took no chances. Before deciding to open its doors, KIDS conducted a marketing study to identify the best communities for its business, said Miller Newton, founder and director.

Newton said the market survey helped locate KIDS in an area where a large number of families live with "an emotional investment in being a family." The program requires the whole family to participate in recovery, he said.

Despite the proliferation of private treatment programs, one drug treatment professional, Bill Hartigan, predicted they will gradually vanish as large corporations take over.

"A lot of people came into the field and saw it as something that they could make some money on, and as soon as they saw it wasn't so easy, they left," said Hartigan, a vice-president of the Massachusetts-based Mediplex Group. In April, Avon Products Inc. acquired the six-year-old firm for just over \$200 million.

Yet the lure of easy money or easy success persists, said Newton. "We're seeing a whole bunch of new people who are sudden experts, and that's scary."

Some professionals express fears that competition for paying clients may lead some of the wrong people into treatment.

"What could happen is that the programs are overzealous in getting people who don't necessarily need treatment," said Bedell.

But entrepreneurs in local drug programs say they are doing well because people really need the treatment.

And some firms are doing quite well.

Mrs. Stuckey and her husband, Robert, a psychiatrist, say their

personal investment of \$700,000 to start Future Health Systems has paid off in two years.

When it opened, 1436114the company treated a handful of clients in the basement of a Paramus office building. Today, between 600 and 700 clients receive treatment weekly at its four branches. The Stuckeys declined to discuss financial figures, except to say the company is operating at a profit.

The Furman Clinic, which Henricks said he started with capital from investors who run similar programs in Minnesota, should turn a profit by 1988, only three years after start-up, said Henricks.

Henricks charges locally competitive fees for services \$62.50 an hour for individual therapy and \$35 an hour for group therapy and has plans to expand to treat about 90 patients, three times the number in treatment now.

All the private programs in Bergen County subscribe to the philosophy of Alcoholics Anonymous, which urges addicts to accept a "higher power."

Counseling is usually intensive, particularly for adolescents. The programs typically involve the whole family in treatment, and most offer many services, including psychodrama and individual therapy.

(SIDEBAR, page a13)

Judge a program by its philosophy and quality of staff

Drug-treatment specialists advise consumers to shop around before choosing a drug counseling program. The panic that often prompts a family to seek treatment before evaluating a program may spell trouble if the family later disagrees with the program's philosophy.

Consumers should consult their local health agencies for recommendations, and be cautious of individuals whose charisma not the success of the program itself persuades the consumer.

"Go for a program, not a person," advises Olive Jacob, a private consultant on alcoholism and substance abuse issues. "There are a lot of good, private, for-profit programs, but it's much harder to keep tabs on an individual."

At the core of a counseling program's effectiveness is the quality of its staff. At the minimum, therapists should have state certification as alcoholism or substance abuse counselors, experts agree. Certification is not required by law.

Programs get higher marks from experts if they are based on the philosophy of Alcoholics Anonymous, long considered a hallmark in the field. The best programs also involve the entire family, not just the addict.

One question is whether medications, such as tranquilizers, are often prescribed during the recovery process. Many program directors contend centers that routinely rely on drug therapy are not as effective as those that promote abstinence from all drugs, except when such therapy is absolutely necessary to control behavior or treat a medical disorder.

All licensed programs in New Jersey are required to abide by a client bill of rights, a practice not necessarily followed by private programs. All public programs are licensed by the state. Licenses are also required of all residential programs, public or private. Private, nonresidential programs that do not dispense medicine do not have to be licensed.

Many experts advise consumers to steer clear of programs that do not guarantee patients certain privileges, such as the right to terminate treatment, to air grievances, or to speak to an attorney.

- Caption: Staff photo by Ed Hill - Former addict Phil Henricks is a government-certified substance abuse counselor at the Furman Clinic.
- Memo: Judge a program by its philosophy and quality of staff - page a13

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