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You Are Your Brother and Sister's Keeper: Gaudenzia, People With Hope

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You Are Your Brother and Sister's Keeper Gaudenzia, People With Hope

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THE COMMUNITY SITE

Gaudenzia, People With Hope is an inpatient program for people with chemical dependency, HIV and co-occurring mental disorders. The program is dedicated to helping people recover from their addiction while learning new tools to help them once again integrate into society. Gaudenzia utilizes the concept of a therapeutic community meaning that the members of the community are all responsible for each other's recovery while the staff acts as facilitators of the process. This concept is exemplified by the manta, "you are your brother and your sister's keeper". Participants in the program attend various educational groups throughout the day such as life skills, health education, HIV/STD education, grief and loss, anger management, mental health education and relapse prevention, all designed to help them in their recovery. They also receive group and one-on-one counselling lead by trained staff daily to talk through any issues and gain insight to recovery.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- To educate the clients about aspects of healthy living such as nutrition, exercise and oral hygiene
- To teach the clients about cardiovascular disease, diabetes and sexually transmitted diseases with a focus on HIV
- To encourage patients to quit the use of tobacco through smoking cessation education
- To present life skills that will aid in them in life outside of Gaudenzia and their addiction such as budgeting and health literacy
- To generate discussion regarding the stigmas of mental illness and substance abuse
- To help facilitate the recovery of the clients from their addiction

METHODS

- Facilitated seminars where information was presented on health and life skills
- Encouraged discussion about health issues that affect the community
- Lead interactive group activities and gave worksheets to reinforce the information presented in group



DISCUSSION

From the educational seminars that were presented, the clients learned how to live a healthier life. They gained insight to the causative factors of many chronic diseases and learned strategies for management. I also helped the clients to practice life skills such as budgeting, public speaking and stress management. In the community of Gaudenzia, we were also able to discuss the stigma of mental illness and drug addiction. Our discussion lead us to think about how to manage these illnesses in the community and the healthcare settings. My presence on the floor allowed the clients to make a connection with someone working in healthcare. As they grew to trust me, they were able to ask intimate questions about their health. This open relationship will potentially foster future positive relationships with their doctors. One of my most important roles on the floor recovery. The recovery of members of Gaudenzia,

DISCUSSION CONTINUED

People With Hope truly depends on every member of the community. You are your brother and your sister's keeper. By integrating into the community, I saw this saying in practice everyday and learned how to live by it. From working at Gaudenzia this summer, I learned how important a community is to recovery and how to be a better provider for patients with mental illness and drug addiction.



PERSONAL STATEMENT

Working at Gaudenzia has been an invaluable experience for me and one that will surely influence my future career in medicine. I have heard countless stories and connected with some of the most amazing people, who continue to smile and persevere after coming from imaginable trauma. From the community of People With Hope, I have seen inspiring examples of courage, kindness and determination that I will never forget. I will take what I have learned, remembering to always stay humble and why I pursued a career in the medical field. I am extremely grateful for the time I have spent at Gaudenzia and hope that my presence has impacted the members of the community as much as being a part of this community has impact me.

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