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LOCAL/STATE

TREATING DRUG, ALCOHOL ABUSE

New approach with elderly addicts

By Jim Fitzgerald
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — A surge in baby boomers has driven up the number of elderly people abusing drugs or alcohol, bringing more attention to the sometimes-delicate problems involved in treating addiction in the aging.

Last summer, the Jewish Home Lifecare nursing home in the Bronx set out to address those issues. Patients 60 and older who come in for rehab after a hospital stay are also screened for addiction and offered a chance at recovery.

Eight beds have been set aside to start, and the nursing home expects to get 480 patients a year. Associate Administrator Gregory Poole-Dayan believes it's the first nursing home to integrate addiction recovery into medical rehabilitation to reach addicts who might not otherwise seek help.

Experts said a focus on elderly addicts is increasingly needed as the population grows. A 2009 study in the journal *Addiction* found that because of the large size "and high substance abuse rate" of the baby-boom generation, the number of Americans over 50 with abuse problems was expected to reach 5.7 million by 2020, double the 2006 figure.

Clare Mannion, 64, of Fort Myers, Florida, says her fear of aging triggered her alcohol addiction.

"For me, growing older was not a positive thing," she said. "When life became difficult for me, when it appeared that my prejudice about being a boomer or elderly became

insurmountable, I turned to the quickest, easiest, legal medication I could find."

The elderly often need powerful pain medications, which are easy to overuse. They typically have dramatic changes in their personal life, such as retirement or the death of a spouse, that can trigger abuse. Family, friends and even doctors sometimes mistake the symptoms of addiction for the symptoms of old age. And dementia can both mask and worsen the effects of drugs and alcohol.

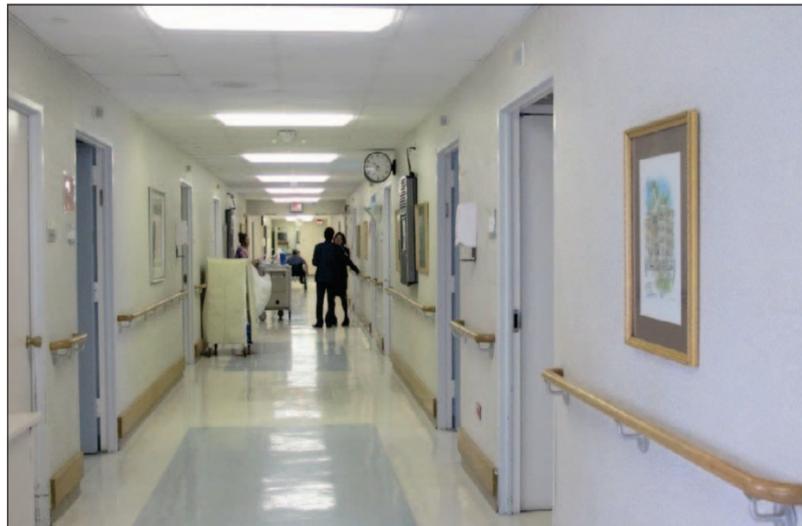
"If you look at the demographics of our country, the baby boomers are getting older and a lot of them were involved in drugs and alcohol back in the '60s and '70s," said James Emery, deputy director of the ElderCare program at the Odyssey House addiction recovery agency in Manhattan.

"Even those who were not, a lot of them have been prescribed a lot of narcotics for pain they might have from a back injury or something going on with their knee and they become addicted," he said.

The increase is a matter of demographics, Poole-Dayan said.

"We know the boomers are coming and there are going to be more and more in the future," he said. "We also know that in this society, their children are spread all over the country, so they don't come for dinner and they don't see the vodka bottle."

Alcoholics Anonymous has long offered special help to the elderly, holding meetings in nursing homes, offering transportation to frail



A hallway at the Jewish Home Lifecare nursing home in the Bronx, as seen on Oct. 30. JIM FITZGERALD/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

members or even bringing meetings to the homebound. Odyssey House has residential and outpatient treatment for elderly addicts, Emery said. The Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation has an addiction treatment "track" in Naples, Florida, called BoomersPlus.

Mannion voluntarily spent seven months in BoomerPlus after a couple of DUI arrests. All the addicts were 50 or older.

"I probably could have dismissed a 20-year-old, or a meth addict, but when you're looking at other professionals — doctors, lawyers, salesmen — it's easier to acknowledge you have this disease if they're saying they have it," she said.

The new Jewish Lifecare program combines physical, occupational and psychological therapy with counseling. In the past, patients would have surgery and rehab, then



Steven Wollman, leader of an addiction recovery program at the Jewish Home Lifecare nursing home in the Bronx, N.Y., discusses the program on Thursday, Oct. 30. A surge in baby boomers is driving up the number of elderly people abusing drugs or alcohol, and the Jewish Home Lifecare nursing home is trying a new way of dealing with the problem. AP PHOTO/JIM FITZGERALD

go home with their physical problem addressed but their addiction untouched, Poole-Dayan said.

The program, funded by a \$213,000 grant from Fan Fox & Leslie R. Samuels

Foundation, is headed by Steven Wollman, a specialist in addiction and mental health. A former pain-medication addict, Wollman said Narcotics Anonymous "saved my life."

WEEKLY COLUMN | SEN. TOM O'MARA

What to do with a budget surplus?

The 2014 elections have reshuffled the political deck in state government and possibly dealt a few new cards on some of the critical decisions that will be on the Capitol's negotiating table in 2015.

Because Senate Republicans have regained, outright, majority control of the state Senate (making us the only Republican-controlled legislative chamber remaining in the nation's 10 most Democratic or so-called "blue" states), a fundamental part of our mission will be to continue to hold a place in state government's decision making for the Upstate economy and fiscal common sense.

Prominent among next year's decisions will be how to utilize what's become a \$5-billion-plus state budget surplus from legal settlements that state regulators have finalized over the past year with numerous global banks. There's no need to review the complex details of why these fines were levied.

The critical point for most New Yorkers is the bottom line: New York is going to be flush with unanticipated dollars to start the state's new fiscal year in 2015. How to utilize this funding is going to dominate the discussion. Save it for a rainy day? Pay down state debt? Spend it? A little of each of these approaches?

The fault lines are already forming. The governor, individual legislators, advocacy groups, lobbyists, you name it, are already staking out priorities and making cases for how the surplus



SEN. TOM O'MARA

should be divvied up.

It's no surprise that some groups are already at the table calling for spending, no matter the future consequences that could result from any higher spending — even if it means, for example, spending to begin new (and very likely expensive) programs and services that can't be sustained by this surplus funding in the future.

Remember that the so-called "settlement surplus" represents a one-time infusion of cash. Spending it on new programs or expanded services that can't be supported by surplus dollars over the long run only means one thing: the obligation to pay for it ultimately falls back on already overburdened taxpayers.

So we need a cautious approach to any calls for higher spending. We shouldn't risk creating huge gaps in future state budgets. That's number one.

Overall, fiscal common sense should rule the day. That could mean setting at least some of the surplus aside in a rainy day fund to address future, inevitable budget crises or shortfalls. It could mean paying down some of the state's still-significant debt (New York is fast approaching its legal debt cap), which will continue to be a heavy burden on taxpayers well into the

future and which draws down critical resources that otherwise could be used to better address vital ongoing needs.

One fiscal watchdog put it this way, and I'm inclined to agree, "The state has spent the last four years trying to get its fiscal house in order ... we need to continue to stay the course on making improvements in our fiscal planning and keeping future years' budget gaps down."

I also believe that we must help local schools and property taxpayers, with a particular emphasis on erasing the damaging and highly controversial Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA) enacted in 2010.

That was a financial grab which has negatively impacted hundreds of school districts and millions of property taxpayers. It needs to go.

The Senate Republican chairman of the Education Committee recently called the elimination of the GEA our "number one goal" in next year's budget.

"Everything else flows from there," he said, "We have been swimming upstream on this issue for several years ... I believe that we should be doing everything conceivable to make [elimination of the GEA] happen."

We also can't ignore the need to anything and everything possible to accelerate our efforts to roll back what remains in New York one of the highest-in-the-nation tax burdens and worst-in-the-nation business climates.

These economic and fiscal shortcomings stand as

job killers and obstacles to economic growth, security and sustainability. High taxes and overregulation weaken our communities, economically and in so many other ways. Accelerated and broad-based tax relief should be prominent on next year's negotiating table.

This could include, for example, the immediate elimination of the higher 18-a energy surcharge enacted in 2009, which has hit Upstate manufacturers, farmers and senior citizens especially hard.

And speaking of Upstate, what about upstate-downstate balance in any allocation? Many Upstate legislators, including myself, will be

watching that closely.

Other ideas? How about a renewed focus on infrastructure? How about creating new jobs by making badly needed, overdue investments to rebuild Upstate's local roads and bridges?

In other words, the settlement surplus is giving decision makers a prime opportunity to debate the fundamental responsibilities facing state government.

State Sen. Tom O'Mara, R-Big Flats, represents New York's 58th Senate District, which includes Steuben, Chemung, Schuyler and Yates counties, and part of Tompkins County.

SATURDAY'S LOTTERY RESULTS

New York
Daily Numbers | 1-2-4 | 8-9-3
Lucky Sum | 7 | 20
Win 4 | 1-2-3-1 | 6-3-0-0
Lucky Sum | 7 | 9
Take Five | 01-02-06-15-24
Pick 10 | 09-10-11-12-18-25-27-31-34-43-50-51-52-54-59-63-66-68-70-77
Lotto | 05-16-17-25-27-31, Bonus: 32



Pennsylvania
Cash 5 | 06-12-18-29-33
Big 4 | 5-8-3-0 | 4-0-6-5
Daily Numbers | 8-5-7 | 3-2-8
Quinto | 5-5-4-8-4 | 7-2-9-1-5
Treasure Hunt | 07-08-13-19-28
Powerball 13-24-30-42-48, Powerball: 27, Power Play: 2

BEST BETS

How to submit: Send information along with your name and contact information to events@the-leader.com or to The Leader, 34 W. Pulteney St., Corning, N.Y. 14830.

Today
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■ Scrapbooking classes | 2 p.m., Corning Senior Center. 962-8000.
■ Team trivia | 7-9 p.m., Cap'n Morgan's, Bridge Street, Corning. 962-1616.
■ Duplicate bridge | 12:30 p.m., Corning Senior Center, 1 Park Lane. 962-8000.
■ Bingo | 5 p.m. doors open, 6:30 p.m. games, Horseheads Elks Lodge, 6 Prospect Hill Road, Horseheads. Public welcome.
■ Bridge | 1:30-4 p.m., Big Flats Community Center, 476 Maple St., Big Flats. 562-8443.
■ Bridge | 7-9 p.m., West Elmira Library, 1231 W. Water St., Elmira. Register, 733-0541.

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PHARMACY TODAY
by Michael Steed, R.Ph.

CAN AIDS BE CURED?

After more than three decades of research, scientists have found they can keep the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) that causes acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) from replicating. Thanks to the cocktails of antiretroviral drugs that have been developed, the death rate among those living with HIV/AIDS has plunged. However, that doesn't necessarily mean that AIDS has been cured. The fact is that, because HIV seems to be able to lie dormant and undetectable in the body, researchers have not been able to totally eradicate it. Instead, patients must adhere to a drug regimen that keeps the virus from ravaging the immune system. That way, they can enjoy long-term remission until a time when better detection techniques may lead to a cure. Getting into care and on treatment will help you learn more about HIV and make decisions to take care of your health. Once you receive a diagnosis of HIV, the most important next step is to get into medical care. Getting into medical care and staying on treatment will help you manage your HIV effectively and make decisions that can keep you healthy for many years. At GEROULD'S PHARMACY, we stay on top of the latest research and studies so that we may keep you informed. We encourage you to come to our location, at 98 West Pulteney St., Corning, and discuss any questions you have. Call 607.936.3233 for any pharmaceutical needs. We also offer 2 other locations in Horseheads and Elmira. We are open 7 days a week all year around. We carry many health related products such as vitamins and herbal supplements, skin care products and home medical aids and supplies. **HINT:** Treating HIV as soon as possible after infection is discovered is important if treatment is going to be effective.

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Publisher
Rick Emanuel | Group Publisher
936-4651, Ext. 303

Editorial
Stella DuPree | Managing Editor
936-4651, Ext. 361
sdupree@the-leader.com

Circulation
Corinne Mulligan
Customer Service/ Sales Manager
936-4651, Ext. 328

Advertising

Adam Mingos | Ad Director
936-4651, Ext. 388
amingos@the-leader.com

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