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## 1st accredited residencies in addiction offered

Douglas Quenqua, New York Times

Monday, July 11, 2011



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Increasingly, the medical establishment is putting its weight behind the latter diagnosis. In the latest evidence, 10 medical schools have just introduced the first accredited residency programs in addiction medicine, where doctors who have completed medical school and a primary residency will be able to spend a year studying the relationship between addiction and brain chemistry.

"This is a first step toward bringing recognition, respectability and rigor to addiction medicine," said David Withers, who oversees the new residency program at the Marworth Alcohol and Chemical Dependency Treatment Center in Waverly, Pa.

The goal of the residency programs, which started July 1 with 20 students at the various schools, is to establish addiction medicine as a standard specialty along the lines of pediatrics, oncology or dermatology. Residents will treat patients with addictions from alcohol and drugs to prescription medicines, nicotine and more, while studying the brain chemistry involved and the role of heredity.

Schools offering the one-year residency include St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital in New York, the University of Maryland Medical System, the University at Buffalo School of

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Medicine and Boston University Medical Center. Some, like Marworth, have been offering programs in addiction medicine for years, simply without accreditation.

The rethinking of addiction as a medical disease rather than a strictly psychological one began about 15 years ago, when researchers discovered through high-resonance imaging that drug addiction resulted in actual physical changes to the brain.

Central to the understanding of addiction as a physical ailment is the belief that treatment must be continuing in order to avoid relapse. Just as no one expects a diabetes patient to be cured after six weeks of healthy diet and insulin management, said Dr. Daniel Alford, who oversees the program at Boston University Medical Center, it is unrealistic to expect most drug addicts to be cured after 28 days in a detoxification facility.

*This article appeared on page A - 5 of the San Francisco Chronicle*

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