

# 'It Can't Happen To Us' — And Then It Does

In my many years of writing about subjects ranging from presidential politics to euthanizing Canadian geese, I've never encountered a topic like this. Addiction — and the unwillingness of insurance companies to cover it and other mental-health issues like bona fide diseases — has generated an overwhelming response. Never have so many people written to me, called me, and stopped into the office to tell their stories and search for answers.

Sadly, I'm afraid that this points to the fact that people consumed by these problems feel that they are not being heard. I get the sense that they feel as though government and media generally don't take them and their issues very seriously, and simply pat them on the head and wish them well.

I also believe that this astounding response signals that this is a far bigger problem than many of us know and most are willing to admit.

The truth is, addiction and other issues that aren't deemed worthy of STAT attention by the medical insurance industry are all around us. Close enough to touch.

This email from a local mom proves that point. She and her family are enduring a nightmare that could strike any of us. She is not merely your neighbor or mine, but any of us could



FROM  
THE EDITOR

JOHN  
OWENS

suddenly be her, unless we wake up to the crisis and deal with it like a crisis.

*Inspired by your current articles on addiction, I am here to share my story.*

*As a parent who was in denial that it was not my child who had the problem, it was everyone else's but mine. I didn't want to accept the truth and continued to fight with my instincts that it just cannot be true.*

*When I finally realized that these "truths" were facts, it was much easier to deal with the heartaches as my husband and I became more effective in dealing with our son's addiction. We knew this was no "band-aid boo-boo" that we could kiss and it goes away.*

*Our son's sufferings were the real pains of addiction. No matter how much we did or said to our son, it was he, the addict, who had to be willing to change for his recovery to be effective.*



First time around (October 2013), we did an intervention. Our son went into treatment in Texas, only to be told a week later that the physician on staff at the facility found no medical criteria to keep our son there. Therefore, the insurance company would not cover his inpatient rehab. No medical reason? We were shocked. Underlying physiological issues and substance abuse are not criteria for inpatient rehab?

We were very fortunate that an anonymous donor came through, and our son was able to remain in treatment for 18 days. From treatment, he went into a sober living home for a few months. Unfortunately, however, he relapsed.

This past April, when our phone rang, I knew it wasn't good. Our son had overdosed and was on his way via an ambulance to a hospital in Texas.

Within hours I was on a plane, not knowing if I would see my son alive. We thank God he was given another chance at life. The hospital released him after a few hours because he had no alcohol in his system!! They gave him Adderall and placed him in my care while he detoxed. To me, this was unbelievably dangerous.

I remained in Texas with him, in a hotel room, detoxing him on my own. After three days of me not leaving his side, he admitted to me that he was powerless over his addiction and begged for help. With the help of a friend of mine and after hours and hours of phone calls searching for a facility that would take our insurance,

## Do-it-yourself detox: Mom and a Texas motel room

we found a treatment facility for him in Nevada. This was his decision.

"Mom, I don't want to die," he told me. "I need help. I'm afraid."

My husband & I are currently attending Al-Anon, Nar-Anon and DayTop, as well as TAM (The Addict's Mom), an online support group.

We also have attended a Narcan training class, and soon our extended family will be attending a Narcan training class as well. We highly recommend this, since being able to administer this heroin overdose antidote can save a loved one's life.

In the meantime, all we can do is pray. Something has to be done with this epidemic, and we will do whatever we can to help. We are losing too many loved ones. Whether it's heroin, crystal meth, crack, cocaine, weed or pills, it's an epidemic and they all are addictive.

Insurance companies need to start realizing this is a disease. Our loved ones need treatment.

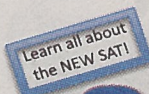
Thank you for bringing the awareness into our community with your articles.

I will continue to do all I can to focus attention on this grave matter. Please, keep the stories coming. Also share your thoughts on battling these problems. Send me an email. Your privacy is assured.

John Owens is editor in chief of Anton Community Newspapers. Email: jowens@antonnews.com

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