

The Weekend Intervention Program: A Ticket for the Road to Recovery

Get caught driving under the influence and you might get sent to . . . school?

Given the choice between spending the weekend in jail or at a university-based residential intervention program, most people would opt for the educational route. That is the choice many area judges are giving people charged

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with alcohol- and drug-related driving offenses: spend their time at the Weekend Intervention Program (WIP) in lieu of jail. WIP, a program of Wright State’s Center for Interventions, Treatment and Addictions Research, is an intensive, three-day program of lectures, films, and small-group and individual counseling sessions.

Since its inception in 1978, WIP has won strong support from area courts for motivating people to take the steps needed to get help. More than 40,000 people have participated in the program. Offenders who attend are more likely to stay sober on the road than those who spend the time in jail,

and are 20 to 30 percent less likely to be re-arrested for DUI.

The program’s founder, Harvey Siegal, Ph.D., professor of community health and of sociology at Wright State, saw that by working with the criminal justice system, WIP could provide early intervention for people either in trouble or getting into trouble. WIP’s professional substance abuse counselors

help offenders examine their consumption habits, realize if there is an abuse problem, docu-

ment its severity, and make recommendations to the individual and to the referring court about the best way to address any problems noted. Some form of professional assistance, such as counseling, is recommended for more than half of all participants.

The university-based program has an added benefit: it gives medical students concentrated, up-close experience with substance abusers. During their first two years of study, students are required to spend one weekend at WIP. There, they witness firsthand how the counseling, evaluation, and referral process works.

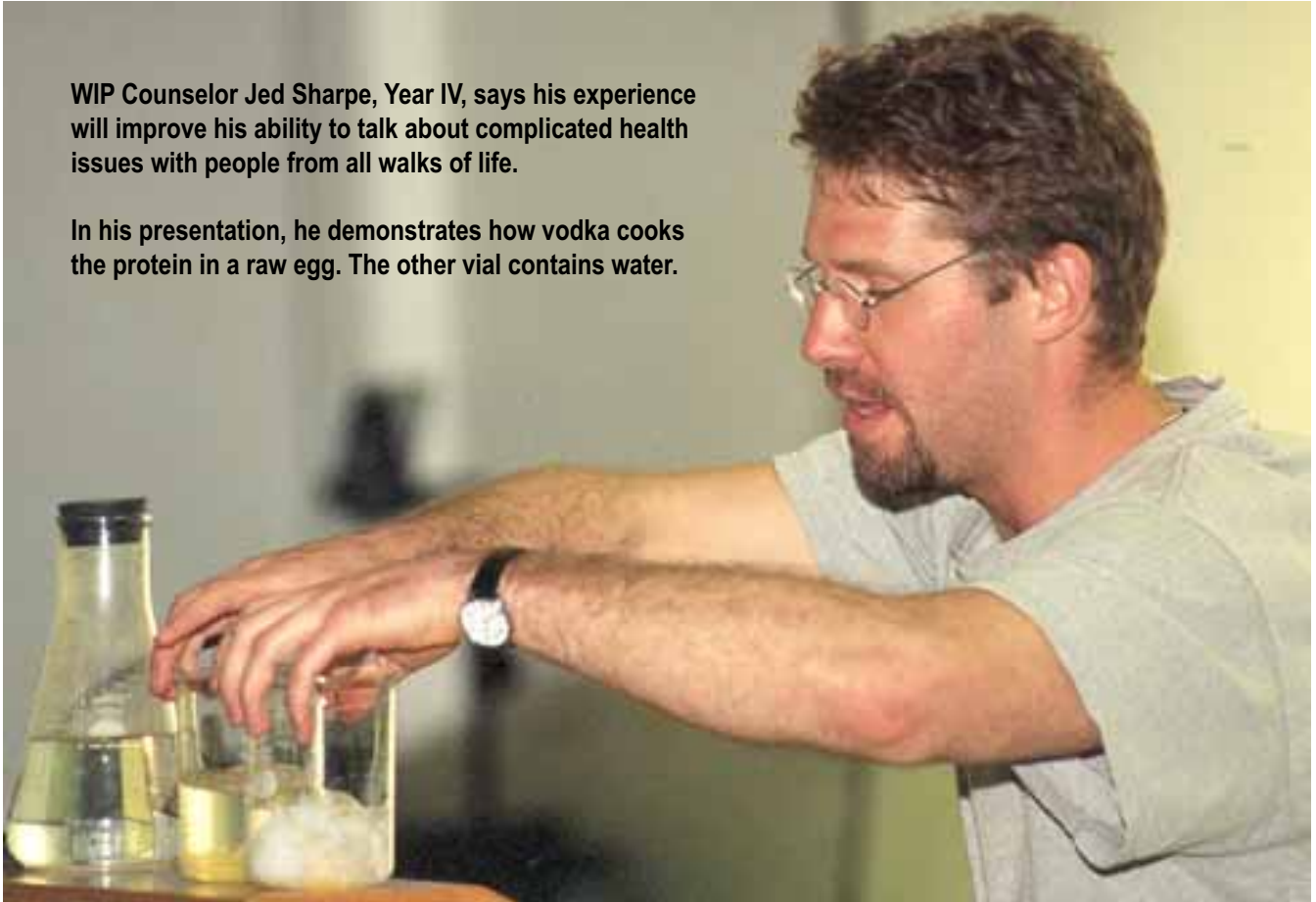
“WIP gives students experience with many of the same issues they’ll need to address with their patients,” says Phyllis Cole, WIP program manager. “It’s a real cross section of society that comes through WIP. These kinds of people problems can affect everyone. Occupational, educational, or social status doesn’t necessarily protect someone from a drinking or drug problem. Students get an awareness that they really need to look for substance abuse problems with each patient and, more importantly, that these problems can be addressed very early on, even with very resistant patients.”

David Rogers, Year III, works for WIP conducting interviews and lecturing on the effects of alcohol. “The first time I participated in the program,” he says, “it was kind of awkward trying to be sensitive to these people and their situations. Now, it’s become second nature. I’m more prepared to address alcohol and drug use issues with my patients and be on the lookout for these problems as well.”

Rogers feels his experience with WIP will greatly enhance his skills as a physician. “I see now that alcohol isn’t just a disease of the liver; it’s a disease of every body system, so it doesn’t matter

WIP Counselor Jed Sharpe, Year IV, says his experience will improve his ability to talk about complicated health issues with people from all walks of life.

In his presentation, he demonstrates how vodka cooks the protein in a raw egg. The other vial contains water.



what specialty of medicine a person finds himself in. They are going to encounter the effects of alcohol and drugs.”

Louis Pilati, M.D., couldn’t agree more. As a medical student, Dr. Pilati worked as a WIP lecturer and counselor. Now, as an attending physician at Kettering Medical Center in emergency medicine and the director of the Kettering Hyperbaric and Wound Care Center, he feels strongly that his WIP experience has been an asset to his work. “I’m able to recognize a drug or alcohol problem quicker and recognize the need for treatment faster,” he says.

Like Rogers, Dr. Pilati feels the small-group counseling sessions taught him a lot about human nature. “I saw how people initially were in great denial and anger about their problem,” he remembers, “but by the end of the week-

end many were in full acceptance of the process or at least open to look at how it’s impacting them. It was an amazing transformation to see.”

David Brittingham personally experienced that transformation.

Thirteen years ago, he received a DUI and was referred to WIP.

“It was a real eye-opener for me,” he explains. “Prior to that, I never gave a thought to what alcohol can do to you and how it affects your life.” Not only did the program help him quit drinking, but it also inspired him to become a certified chemical dependency counselor. Today, Brittingham is a WIP counselor and certified Employee Assistance Program (EAP) counselor at Delphi Harrison.

“When someone’s sent to jail, they just write it off, do their time, and go right back to drinking and driving,” Brittingham explains. With WIP, participants “get a knowledge base about why things happen to them when they drink

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and what it can do to them. That doesn’t happen when you just go to jail.”

Wright State is proud of the program’s accomplishments over the years and the impact it has made on the lives of both participants and medical students. WIP has received national attention and has been widely replicated throughout the United States. 📌

— Ann Biswas