

Causes, cures for alcoholism discussed

The recent four-day conference on alcoholism and drug abuse in Alaska was beneficial in that it presented differing views on treating drug abuse, according to one psychologist but he said the conference offered little in the way of helping Native Alaskans with underlying problems of alcohol abuse.

The four-day conference was sponsored by the Center for Alcohol and Addiction Studies Annual School sponsored by the University of Alaska, Anchorage.

This year's theme of the Center for Alcohol and Addiction Studies Annual School sponsored by the University of Alaska dealt with treatment of alcoholism and drug abuse in a multi-cultural and changing society.

Many of the problems of drug and alcohol abuse facing Native and non-Native Alaskans come from the societal changes being experienced by all. The change from the old, slower-paced life with simpler ways and rewards now conflict with society's more

hurried get-ahead world and cause conflicts within individuals.

Drug abuse is experienced by all the people in Alaska, but it is particularly detrimental to Alaska Natives. Bernard Segal, director for the school said that the school is trying to help bring an awareness of the impact that drugs and alcohols can have on users and of the help that is available to make treatment and prevention programs more effective.

"I believe that the program developed was provocative and informative, and that each of the participants will be able to return to their jobs with a renewed perseverance to help people come to grips with drinking and drug problems and their effects."

Some workers from family service programs and alcohol treatment programs attended the conference to discuss drug treatments which have passed the test of time, and new treatment

ideas.

Steven J. Wolin, M.D., Center for Family Research at the George Washington University, said environmental factors which may contribute to the recurrence of alcoholism in generations of families. He believes the interruption of family rituals may encourage the development of alcoholism in future generations, and make some families and children a higher risk for alcoholism.

A broad overview of what constitutes effective treatment showed participants the dynamics of treatment, what happens or should happen in treatment, how treatment for alcoholism evolved and what changes are necessary in programs and individual workers and their clients for effective treatment.

Jacquelyn Small, M.S.W., a therapist and counselor-trainer, discussed the role of the counselor and therapist in the helping process and the characteristics of the helping professional. "Each person has a natural ability

to be a healer, and that each person has a need to discover or rediscover that ability. She also talked of how the helper uses that ability to foster change.

Barry Levit, a psychologist for the Norton Sound Health Corporation Family Services in Nome spoke about the annual school.

I find that schools like this stimulate thoughts. What happens with me is that by listening to what people talk about on the various topics I get to thinking of various ways to take this information back to the clinic to use.

"Most of what was presented were therapy techniques...western therapy techniques not necessarily specialized to this area. I was presented with a lot of information which made me think, and through this thinking, I know I will evolve something as to how I can use this knowledge in Nome for instance.

"I think that the cross-culturalness of this workshop was

something that everybody was aware of, but never said. There wasn't a lot said of cultural research for the Native groups. An example is that Eskimos tend not to be quite as verbal as white folks and working with these Native peoples involves different techniques using the recognized cultural differences. Traditional Eskimo families are this way. older people tend to be this way because of their tradition, and the children that were sent outside to schools in Oregon or wherever else returned to their villages with different thoughts and values.

"How do you deal with the cultural change in treatment of people who have an alcohol or drug problem as a result of this kind of disorganization or conflicts?

"None of the speakers really addressed the drinking or kinds of drinking that happen in rural Alaska and what we can do about it. If there was a deficit that I saw in this school, that was it," Levit said.