

****MEMO****

RE: VIVITROL TREATMENT

Follow up to Meeting held Monday, June 1, 2015

I am sending this out at the request of some judges that asked me questions after the meeting last night. I am certainly not an expert on heroin treatment. I only know what I have learned from my experience on the bench. I dictated this information to my assistant early this morning, quickly, to get this information to you in a timely manner in order to address the questions that were brought up at the dinner sponsored by the Criminal Justice Council last night.

The last batch of heroin in this area killed 13 people over Memorial Day weekend. The dealers are calling it "toe-tag" (i.e. the I.D. tag placed on a corpse in the morgue).

I am sending out this information to share with you what I am doing in the Miamisburg Municipal Court to address the heroin epidemic within my jurisdiction, and to reduce the number of repeat offenders in this Court.

First, I have found that many heroin addicts *are* "save-able," and that this is *not* a "lost cause." The key is implementing effective treatment strategies. I have found that the Vivitrol injection along with out-patient counseling is the most effective form of heroin treatment available at this time. The Miamisburg Municipal Court has been using Vivitrol treatment for nearly six (6) months. I want to explain how Vivitrol treatment works.

The Miamisburg Court primarily uses Cornerstone for Vivitrol treatment. They have two (2) facilities located within Montgomery County, one in Riverside, and the other in Centerville. Cornerstone's telephone number is 1-844-293-6926 and its website is www.cornerstone-project.com.

The injection is expensive, with a cost of approximately \$800.00 per month, but this is funded by the defendant's healthcare. Vivitrol treatment is covered by the Affordable Care Act and many insurance carriers, including Medicaid and CareSource. Medicaid and CareSource will cover the cost of the injections for up to 18 months, as will most insurance coverage.

The defendant must be clean (having not used any heroin) for at least 8 days before receiving the 1st injection. The way I accomplish this is by incarcerating the defendant for at least a minimum of 10 days, but depending on the circumstances, I may incarcerate the defendant for up to 60 days before the 1st injection.

Then the Miamisburg Probation Department makes arrangements with Cornerstone for the defendant to begin treatment. Cornerstone will actually pick up the defendant from the jail at a specific, pre-arranged time. Cornerstone then transports the defendant to its facility and tests the defendant to ensure the person is not allergic to the injection. After the defendant passes the allergy test, he/she is given their first injection in the posterior. Along with the shot, all Vivitrol patients are required to participate in intensive out-patient counseling and mandatory drug tests. In order to continue receiving the injections, the defendant must attend all counseling sessions as required.

Vivitrol patients receive an injection every month, so long as he/she attends the required counseling throughout the month. If the defendant misses a counseling session or an injection appointment, Cornerstone may remove the defendant from the program. Then the Miamisburg Probation Department initiates a probation revocation action, issuing a warrant to immediately arrest and incarcerate the defendant.

The way Vivitrol works is that it turns off the opiate receptors in the defendant's brain. If they use heroin after the injection, the defendant will not feel high. He/she will actually feel ill instead.

The only problems with this is that if someone is severely injured in an accident and rushed to the hospital, pain medication will not work on them, because the opiate receptors in the brain have been turned off, and no opiates will have an effect. Also, the injection does not block the effect of any other drugs, such as alcohol, crack, or xanax.

Cornerstone is not the only facility offering Vivitrol treatment. There are also private doctors who can prescribe Vivitrol. If the defendant receives the injection through a private doctor (and not through a treatment facility like Cornerstone), then the defendant must also seek independent counseling on his/her own. This counseling can be through NA or AA, or through the V.A., so long as the person is attending counseling in addition to receiving the injections.

My problem with methadone and suboxone treatment programs such as "Project Cure" is that it transfers addiction from one drug to another. The success rate appears to be extremely low, and from my experience it just does NOT work. Another problem with methadone programs is that many addicts sell it on the street to buy other drugs.

My problem with many in-patient programs is that drugs are readily available there. At least that's what I hear from defendants and their family members.

Vivitrol treatment is not a magic bullet, but is an effective tool to beat heroin addiction. Right now I find it to be the MOST effective tool. I have seen people who were terribly addicted to heroin who are doing well now, because of receiving the shot along with participating in counseling.

To learn more about Vivitrol, you may want to contact Judge Robert Peeler in the Warren County Common Pleas Court. The Warren County Courts have been using Vivitrol for years, and I learned a lot of this info from Judge Peeler.

Also, Judge Fred Moses of the Hocking County Municipal Court operates a specialized Vivitrol Drug Court docket for over 3 years,

which has been very effective and successful. Judge Moses has a powerpoint presentation about his program, and he is willing to appear and present that information to any interested courts or other law-enforcement related agencies. Judge Moses can be contacted at the Hocking Municipal Court, P.O. Box 950, 1 East Main Street, Logan, Ohio 43138. His phone number is (740) 385-2250, and his fax number is (740) 385-3826.

The Ohio Chief Probation Officer's Association is also a good resource for information about the Vivitrol injection, and they offer periodic training on the topic. Contact the Association by calling 614-273-1400, or visit www.ocpoa.org to learn more.

As for overdose cases, I know you are all familiar with Narcan. Narcan is an injection essentially used to bring a person "back to life" after a heroin overdose. Narcan is becoming increasingly prevalent and is being used by many police departments across the country. The Miamisburg Police just completed training to use Narcan. And very early last Thursday morning I was awakened by the West Carrollton police for a search warrant after they had to use Narcan on 2 females and 1 male.

At our meeting last night I was very impressed with Judge Tucker's speech. I agree that socio-economic factors play a substantial role in drug and alcohol abuse, but from my experience, heroin addicts come from all walks of life. Heroin is far-reaching and does not discriminate. It reaches those living in the worst of poverty, as well as those living in the most wealthy neighborhoods. I have a defendant on probation right now whose father is a multi-millionaire. Also, think about Phillip Seymour Hoffman, the actor who overdosed on heroin and died last year. You can't buy your way out of heroin addiction.

Over the past week I have been attending the D.A.R.E. graduation ceremonies at the elementary schools in my jurisdiction. D.A.R.E. stands for Drug Abuse Resistance Education. The program is implemented through the local police department. Officer Doug

Sherrits is the Miamisburg D.A.R.E. officer. Fifth graders participate in the program, and each elementary school has a graduation ceremony for them at the end of the school year. This is the first year that I have addressed heroin at the D.A.R.E. graduation ceremony. I looked around the room and saw a little boy named Wes, whose father I know went to prison over heroin. I also know that after his father's release from prison, his father has already had to be "brought back to life" with Narcan. When I saw Wes seated there in that crowd of 11-year-olds, I decided right then and there that the fifth graders already know about heroin and that it needs to be addressed.

If I can do anything to help you, or if you have any questions, I have a very competent and knowledgeable Chief Probation Officer, Chantelle Jennings. Please feel free to contact her at (513) 465-7825. Also, feel free to contact my Judicial Assistant, MiMi DeGrow. She is in law school and she is also very competent. Her office number is 937-847-6487. I am probably not even as knowledgeable as either of them about this topic, but please also feel free to call me on my cell phone any time at 937-286-0091.

Good Luck,



**Judge Robert W. Rettich, III
Miamisburg Municipal Court**