

*2014 Highlights:*

- *Why Should You Refer a Patient to OA?*
- *I Am a Clinician and OA Success*

*Inside This Issue:*

- *OA Support in Recovery*
- *The Doctor as Patient*
- *Complementing the Professional Community*
- *Pamphlets for Professionals*
- *Preamble*

## **Why Should You Refer a Patient to OA?**

— *Lori Pesciotta, LCSW, Beacon Counseling, York, Maine*

As a clinical social worker in private practice, I would estimate at least 50 percent of my case-load deals with addiction. Sadly, not enough of these patients received referrals from medical health professionals who are often the first line of contact for people with addictions.

Addiction is an invisible disease. Most patients have mastered the art of hiding their addictions, so it is up to the medical health professional to ask, prod and uncover the invisible symptoms. The medical setting is often a patient's first connection with some-

one who can influence the direction of whole-health care.

Folks with addictions are just like you and me: engaged in their lives, raising families, working, taking care of aging parents, dealing with life's transitions. They are good, smart people who, over time, have developed coping strategies, sometimes unhealthy strategies, to deal with stressors. But somewhere in their development, they learned that internal feeling-states were too frightening, so they discovered that compulsive or obsessive eat-



ing took away their pain, until the next time.

One of my relatives is a high-functioning, successful person, generous to a fault, but often at her own expense. In meeting others' needs, she became a "need less" person. She has struggled with eating issues most of her life

*Continued on page 3*

Learn more about OA.  
Visit the OA Web site.  
[www.oa.org](http://www.oa.org)



To order from the OA  
online store, go to  
[bookstore.oa.org](http://bookstore.oa.org)

## ***I Am a Clinician and OA Success***

— *Anonymous*

I am a substance-abuse clinician who works with a variety of clients coping with substance abuse. My role is to assist my clients in recognizing what barriers exist that prevent them from becoming substance free, to give them the quality and peace in their lives they all deserve.

Many of the people I see replaced their addictions with food, and for many, their drug of



choice is food. I can serve these individuals not only because of my education and experience in the field, but also because I once weighed 567 pounds (257 kg). I now weigh 250 pounds (114 kg) and have maintained that weight for the past nine years.

How did I do that? And how do I maintain that weight loss? I belong to

a Twelve-Step Fellowship called Overeaters Anonymous (OA). This support program has meetings that people can attend in person, on the telephone and even online. Compulsive eaters can share with others who share their struggles and get the love and support many of us need to cope with our common problem with food.

As health-care professionals, if you have clients who could benefit from this lifesaving program, check out OA's Web site, [www.oa.org](http://www.oa.org).

# OA Support in Recovery

— Linda M. Grande, LCPC

As a counselor for over 30 years, I have had considerable experience with Twelve-Step recovery programs. Overeaters Anonymous, based on the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, has been a valuable resource for my clients. Recovering from an eating disorder such as binge eating, bulimia or anorexia can be a long and difficult road.

Learning to eat “normally” can seem like an impossible task. Having a healthy relationship with

food, living without fear, accepting one’s body, using food for strength and nourishment rather than to numb feelings, may appear easy. But for a person who suffers from an eating disorder, this is anything but easy.

Unlike numerous diet programs that focus only on the number on the scale, OA provides members with tools and group support that give them hope, strength and encouragement. OA helps members address the



psychological and emotional reasons for using food to numb feelings and emotions. At the same time, while working with a sponsor, a member can begin to have a healthier relationship with food and to let go of body-image concerns and fear about food. He or she can begin to live life to the fullest.

I encourage my clients

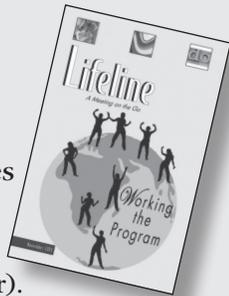
to try at least 12 meetings in different areas before making a decision. Some may feel comfortable at their first meeting and pick a sponsor right away.

If you are a mental-health professional and have never attended a Twelve-Step meeting, I highly recommend that you attend a few open OA meetings. This will put you in a better position to encourage your clients and to explain better how OA works.

The OA Web site, [www.oa.org](http://www.oa.org), is very informative and has a list of meetings in your area.

## Enhance the Waiting Room Experience!

Overeaters Anonymous publishes *Lifeline*, a full-color magazine produced monthly (except April and October).



In *Lifeline*, OA members share their experience, strength and hope found in OA. Subscribers consider *Lifeline* “a meeting on the go.” Your patients or clients may benefit from reading *Lifeline* while in your waiting room. To subscribe for \$23, go to [www.oa.org/lifeline-magazine/subscribe-to-print-lifeline/](http://www.oa.org/lifeline-magazine/subscribe-to-print-lifeline/)

## Complementing the Professional Community With Overeaters Anonymous

Many professional organizations and institutions work with OA members to inform other professionals and the public about compulsive eating and the resources available in OA to address this problem.

OA is not in competition with the professional community. On the contrary, many members consider OA to be a complement to the professional services they receive.

In part, OA works because it offers an ongoing support system for members and encourages them to help one another, thereby weaken-

ing their isolation and loneliness. OA members provide this support through sharing their experience, strength and hope with one another. OA claims no medical, nutritional or psychological expertise. It suggests that interested members contact qualified professionals for help in these areas.

## The Doctor as Patient

— Anonymous

How did it come to this? I was 40 years old, sitting across from a leading weight-loss doctor. But I was the patient! After five years, I was returning to his practice. My weight had gone up and down 30 to 60 pounds (14 to 27 kg) every year.

There I sat, a well-respected physician, graduate of Johns Hopkins University, board certified in two specialties, noted lecturer here and abroad, and now I was a desperate patient. I weighed 290 pounds (132 kg), 50 to 60 pounds (23 to 27 kg) more than when I left his practice. I had developed malignant hypertension with proteinuria, severe sleep apnea and debilitat-

ing arthritis.

After reviewing my records, the doctor, knowing I had succeeded on his diet before, asked a question that cut through my fat and into my soul: “Are you stupid?” I turned red and could not answer; I had asked myself that question after each binge.

One year after that doctor’s visit, my father passed away. My depression and anxiety increased with the feelings of restlessness, irritability and discontent described in the Big Book (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, 4th ed.). My eating increased, my binges got worse, and my weight went up to 330 pounds (150 kg).

*Continued on page 3*



## Sound Bites from OA

Recordings from an Internet radio show dedicated to educating the public about recovery from compulsive eating using OA’s Twelve-Step program.

[www.oa.org/newcomers/sound-bites-from-oa/](http://www.oa.org/newcomers/sound-bites-from-oa/)

## Why Should You Refer a Patient to OA?

*Continued from page 1*

and didn't know it.

One day, I shared what I'd seen with my clients who had gone to Overeaters Anonymous. This time, for whatever reason, she took the first step by walking into an OA meeting. In doing so, she had to deal with her denial that she had become powerless over her eating. That was a year ago. Today, she's a testament to dealing with her real-life issues, and she looks and feels much better.

In making OA referrals, I have learned that the clinician's patient, nonjudgmental attitude allows those who need help to safely reflect and compassionately consider what their lives could be like by asking for what they need emotionally. A few questions can lay the groundwork of self-awareness in your patient: "What coping strategies do you use to manage your day-to-day stressors? Are they helpful to you? Do they work? What benefits do you

### Pamphlets for Professionals

The World Service Office (WSO) of Overeaters Anonymous has pamphlets for health-care professionals. To order, call the WSO (505-891-2664) or order online and find other pamphlets at [bookstore.aa.org](http://bookstore.aa.org).

**Introducing OA to Health-Care Professionals—** Explains how OA complements professional care. Includes a questionnaire for clients and patients about eating behaviors. (#753/\$.15 each)

**Is Food a Problem for You?—** Includes 15 questions to determine if someone is a compulsive eater, a description of the OA program, member testimonials and the Twelve Steps. (#750/\$.20 each)

**Fifteen Questions—** Helps your client decide if he or she is a compulsive eater. (#755/\$.15 each)

US Shipping: \$5 for orders up to \$24.99; 20% for orders \$25 to \$59.99; 17% for orders \$60 to \$99.99; 12% for orders above \$100. Call the WSO at 505-891-2664 for expedited orders and shipping outside the US.

see? Or are you doing the same things (that don't work) over and over, expecting a different response?"

Many people with addictions will tell you, if you ask them, that they feel overwhelmed, helpless, discouraged and burdened, with no way out. Readiness, courage, acceptance that they need help, and reassurance there are people who will help, open the door to

inner healing.

Addictive eating means that for some people, food becomes a solution when feeling overwhelmed, angry, sad, depressed or almost or fully devoid of self-love. But bringing awareness to their inner processes, supported by others experiencing the same internal struggles as in an OA group, can transform their lives. Easy? No! Doable? Absolutely!

Still the caring person,

### Preamble

Overeaters Anonymous is a Fellowship of individuals who, through shared experience, strength and hope, are recovering from compulsive overeating. We welcome everyone who wants to stop eating compulsively. There are no dues or fees for members; we are self-supporting through our own contributions, neither soliciting nor accepting outside donations. OA is not affiliated with any public or private organization, political movement, ideology or religious doctrine; we take no position on outside issues. Our primary purpose is to abstain from compulsive eating and to carry the message of recovery through the Twelve Steps of OA to those who still suffer.

my relative is discovering her inner needs and core. Serenity and pride have replaced self-blame and shame, and she is learning to ask for help. Most of the time, she is serene and centered. The healing is not in maintaining a state of calm all the time but in realizing she has new ways to get back there, pausing and taking a breath, making room for her inner goodness to shine.

## The Doctor as Patient

*Continued from page 2*

In December 2001, I rediscovered OA. There I learned I was not stupid and had more than adequate willpower to succeed in my life, except when food, feelings, meals, relationships, discomfort and snacks came together. I was a food addict. Food, like alcohol for an alcoholic, was more powerful than I was with all my medical knowledge.

I surrendered to the pro-

gram and began to work the Twelve Steps, use the OA tools, follow a healthy food plan and be accountable to my sponsor, who was my mentor and spiritual guide. One hundred thirty pounds (59 kg) came off in 15 months, and I have maintained a 120- to 130-pound (54- to 59-kg) weight loss for more than 10 years.

The miracle is that I don't obsess over my binge foods. I have been sugar, flour and fried-

food free for 99.9 percent of 4,350 days in program. OA has helped restore my mental, spiritual and physical health. I continue to go to meetings, surrender, do service, work with a sponsor and follow a food plan. All my medical numbers look good, and my compliance as a patient has improved.

I recommend OA to my obese patients; discuss my experience; encourage them to visit the OA Web site, [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org); try six

OA meetings within one month and find a sponsor.

My medical knowledge now includes accepting that certain foods and eating habits can be addictive. The neurobehavioral brain-scanning research continues to prove this, and hopefully, that information will reach more members in the medical field.

The knowledge that I am a food addict and the program of OA have saved my life.

Overeaters Anonymous  
P.O. Box 44020  
Rio Rancho, NM 87174-4020

Address Service Requested

# 12 STEPS

## *Twelve Steps*

- to freedom from yo-yo dieting
- to peer understanding
- to renewed self-esteem
- to freedom from compulsion
- to a healthier body
- to a new attitude toward life



[www.oa.org](http://www.oa.org)



*Together We Can*