



ASAM Weekly: What does ASAM mean to you?

Bernd Wollschlaeger: I decided to join ASAM because I was searching for an organization to assist and guide me in the formal education and training to become a certified addiction specialist.

Soon I discovered that the open communication within ASAM and the direct access to its leadership provided me much more than “only” the service as a specialty society but a professional home.

ASAM Weekly: If you could trade places with any other addiction professional for a week, famous or not famous, living or dead, who would you choose and why?

Bernd Wollschlaeger: In my opinion Dr. William Duncan Silkworth, MD (1873-1951) was first to realize that alcoholism is a disease caused by “an allergic reaction of the body to alcohol” and not a moral weakness but “a compulsion of the mind.” In the characterization of a relapse as a “slip” he realized that relapses were preceded by wrong thinking and do not represent psychotic behavior. I use his letter “Slips and Human Nature” as a teaching tool for medical students to educate them about the disease of addiction. I wish I could spend some time with him to learn and understand more about human nature.

ASAM Weekly: What in your professional life are you focusing your energies on currently?

Bernd Wollschlaeger: To create awareness among my peers that addiction is a disease and can be treated. Therefore I teach and lecture during Grand Rounds. I also try to educate political decision makers to support funding for addiction treatment and research. Unfortunately, I lately observe that politicians take one step forward and two steps back but I won’t get discouraged. Too much is at stake.

ASAM Weekly: If you had a million dollars to spend on increasing access to and improving the quality of addiction treatment, how would you spend it?

Bernd Wollschlaeger: Design a web site for addiction professionals containing evidence based resources on how to implement high quality addiction medicine treatment in their medical practice. Such resources could include documentation templates and treatment protocols, online videos and interactive web-based seminars (webinars).



Dr. Bernd Wollschlaeger, MD, FFAFP, FASAM
ASAM’s Membership Committee
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The creation of online disease registries in the form of secured cloud based applications will provide tools to upload de-identified patient data to compare treatment progress and outcome. The initial funding should provide the seed money for software development and grants can assist in the maintenance and upgrade of the project. An initial pilot project could serve as a proof of concept.

ASAM Weekly: What motivates you to work in the field?

Bernd Wollschlaeger: My father died from the disease of alcoholism and my mother was affected by it, too. Realizing that I also suffer from the disease I needed to understand why and how I can help myself and others. This motivated me to enter the field of addiction medicine and the daily encounter with my patients strengthens my resolve to continue caring for those whose lives can be changed and saved.

ASAM Weekly: If you could choose a superpower, what would it be, and why?

Bernd Wollschlaeger: Well, any country, institution, organization or entity which focuses on the improvement of the health and well-being of its citizens, employees, or members is by definition a superpower because it realized that its collective strength depends on the strength of each



individual member. Such a society based on justice and solidarity is not an utopian goal but a daily commitment worthwhile to pursue and to achieve.

ASAM Weekly: What are you most proud of?

Bernd Wollschlaeger: I grew up in the shadow of a father who was a highly decorated German World War II tank commander and Nazi officer. I struggled to understand why he condoned and supported the unspeakable crimes committed against the Jewish people and as result became a physician, converted to Judaism, emigrated to Israel, served in the Israel Defense Forces and am blessed with three beautiful children. I learned that being true to myself provides me with the daily strength to live and to contribute to create a better world.

ASAM Weekly: What is the last book you read, film you watched, and who is your favorite artist or musician?

Bernd Wollschlaeger: The last book I read: Constantine's Sword – The Church and the Jews by James Carroll The last film I watched: Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy Favorite musician: Sting

ASAM Weekly: What publications do you subscribe to?

Bernd Wollschlaeger: Among others : New York Times, Wall Street Journal, The Nation, Foreign Affairs, Journal of the American Medical Association, New England Journal of Medicine, Journal of Addiction Medicine

ASAM Weekly: What do you see as the next trends in the field?

Bernd Wollschlaeger: a) Practice-based addiction medicine research utilizing online collaboration and information exchange. b) Web-based disease registries with standardized treatment documentation allowing for the pooling of outcome data, c) Genetic testing allowing for whole genome sequencing to identify neurotransmitter abnormalities that contribute to brain based disorders.

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