

# 27<sup>th</sup> World Federation of Therapeutic Communities Conference

Bangkok, Thailand

October 29<sup>th</sup> – November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018

---

## Opening Comments from the WFTC President

*Dr. Sushma D Taylor*

Dear Honored Guests, Colleagues, Students, Friends, Family, welcome to the 2018 World Conference of the World Federation of Therapeutic Communities. It was in 1975 when the idea of establishing a world federation was first conceived. The place where this idea was first created was Bangkok, Thailand. So it is fitting that the 27<sup>th</sup> World Conference be held in the beautiful city named Krung Thep Maha Nakhon – although the true ceremonial name of Bangkok is a full 168 letters which makes it the longest named city on Earth– we refer to Bangkok simply as City of Angels or Krung Thep.

My greetings and appreciation to the Royal Thai Government, to the Thailand Ministry of Public Health and the office of Narcotics Control Board, to the directors of Princess Mother National Institute on Drug Abuse, and to our Thai colleagues engaged in the important work on Substance Use Disorder prevention and treatment.

My sincere thanks to the members of the WFTC organizing committee:

- Mr. Garth Popple – WFTC Vice-President & Conference Chair
- Mr. Edward Carlson – WFTC organizing committee
- Mr. Augusto Nogueira – WFTC organizing committee
- Mr. Martin Infante – WFTC organizing committee

We would also like to extend thanks to the members of the WFTC conference scientific committee:

- Mr. Rowdy Yates
- Dr. Lynne Magor-Blatch
- Dr. Apinun Aramrattana
- Mr. Phaedon Kaloterakis
- Dr Sarayuth Boonchaipanitwattana
- Mr. Augusto Nogueira

We recognize our Federation partners:

- Australasian Therapeutic Communities Association
- European Federation of Therapeutic Communities
- Federation of Latin American Therapeutic Communities
- Treatment Communities of America
- Federation of Therapeutic Communities in Asia

We are most grateful to our Sponsors:

- Center Point
- WestCare
- We Help Ourselves
- Concepts Foundation

We extend special thanks to

- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime – Mr. Gilberto Gerra
- UNAIDS – Mr. Jeremy Douglas

# 27<sup>th</sup> World Federation of Therapeutic Communities Conference

Bangkok, Thailand  
October 29<sup>th</sup> – November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018

---

We would also like to recognize the individuals who extended invaluable assistance:

Ms Lukkhana Klangkarn (Nicky) from Princess Mother National Institute on Drug Abuse Treatment;

Ms Oranooch Sungkhawanna from the Office of Narcotics Control Board; Mr Craig Hassell - Conference Online; Mr Miguel Garibay - Center Point, Mr Vinij Khureya (Vinny) - We Help Ourselves; Mr Trevor Hallewell -We Help Ourselves; And of course our WFTC Conference Coordinator: Gino Vumbaca.

**And now**, if I may offer some observations. What is occurring today in the World presents a problem of some magnitude—huge numbers of people are currently involved with the use and misuse of drugs. This is not only a result of increased availability, but other contributing factors such as family, unemployment, poverty and social dislocation.

Faced with similar or common problems, we may learn from one another – through a cultural exchange. Eastern countries can benefit from the West’s attempts to tackle its drug problem just as many Western treatment programs have incorporated Eastern concepts within their services.

In the West, individuality is often selected at the expense of collectiveness. The emphasis becomes on achieving – or the “*bottom line*”. This has resulted in large segments of the population feeling alienated, separate and alone. In addition we see human isolation, family fragmentation, interpersonal alienation and loss of connectedness. Furthermore, there are similar conflicts for families, for neighborhoods, for our communities.

The East and West share a common sentiment for the spiritual, ethical and moral considerations for the care of people. In the East, enduring disciplines, such as Buddhism, are elaborate moral systems that set out conditions of psychological and spiritual health. While Western positions emphasize the uniqueness of the individual and personal self-assertion, the Eastern views promote interdependence and the negation of the self.

These spiritual and philosophical principles can be used effectively in treating the troubles associated with drug and alcohol problems – just as many therapeutic communities have established a unique blend of the two – a balance of perspectives from both East and West.

Many drug treatment programs in the United States have incorporated Eastern traditions and beliefs. First and foremost is the belief that change is possible; that one can overcome adversity, that one must take responsibility and that one must be accountable. Certainly Buddhists believe that the accumulation of good deeds will enable them to reach higher states of being. The Theravada Buddhist translation from the Pali canon says, “*do it yourself*”. Each must succeed therefore through their own efforts.

# 27<sup>th</sup> World Federation of Therapeutic Communities Conference

Bangkok, Thailand

October 29<sup>th</sup> – November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018

---

One major ingredient is the sense of family – of extended family, of being a part of something larger than oneself – engaged in a cause greater than the individual in order to make the World a better place. Another concept is that one must practice responsibility to others and for others. So indeed, the underlying philosophy of the therapeutic community is cross-cultural and incorporates both eastern and western traditions that are grounded in religious and social/cultural systems.

Yet, there are, of course some thorny issues when it comes to specific practices of the methods as utilized in some Western Program Models. Western philosophy in general encourages rational means to resolve emotional conflicts. In the East, self-restraint is taught from early childhood. Children in a household are directed to respect parental authority and to avoid conflicts. Issues regarding self-expression are contained, and are limited.

Also, it is frequently presumed that there is greater emphasis on shame in the East as differentiated from the greater effect of guilt in the West. But like guilt, shame produces self-alienation, feelings of inferiority and, must be disclosed and understood.

Many Eastern values have been successfully incorporated into Western Drug Prevention and Treatment Programs. First is the concept of restraint, which is well understood in Asia and is an idea we try to incorporate into our programs. Second is the development of responsibility; Third, the development of empathy and compassion; and lastly, the development of a spiritual construct for life. This is a tradition in the East and a concern in the West.

Therapeutic Communities teach that one must be restrained, one must behave responsibly towards self and others. It is a place of sanctuary, where deep feelings can be expressed without hesitation. There is a place for anger; a place for uncertainty; and a place to share pain within the context of this extended Therapeutic Community family, not by repressing feelings, but rather, learning to express feelings in constructive and meaningful ways.

We are a humanizing community, sharing a common belief and value system. Our fundamental doctrines lie in discipline, compassion, responsibility, helping and supporting each other, challenging ourselves and one another, being responsible, caring and being respectful of self and others. Above all, we believe that personal change is possible, and that community life is essential to that change. We believe that people can undergo great change.

As Confucius said, *“By nature we are pretty much alike. It is learning and practice that sets us apart.”* Or perhaps what we become depends not on conditions, but rather on decisions.

**Finally**, the Asian tradition of respect for elders and respect for seniors, and for parents is a tradition that needs again to be remembered and valued. From the Western perspective we can offer the notion that there is no shame in the disease of addiction which afflicts all nations. There is no shame in becoming afflicted; there is only pain. And to share this pain with others similarly

# 27<sup>th</sup> World Federation of Therapeutic Communities Conference

Bangkok, Thailand

October 29<sup>th</sup> – November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018

---

afflicted, reduces the sense of isolation, the sense of humiliation, the sense of alienation from the larger family, and from the community.

These concepts have produced the most phenomenal and effective outcomes for a variety of people. There is far more in common between East and West including a history of the search for meaning beyond the temporal, the belief in transformation..., placing a high value on productivity..., using common ethics..., striving for achievement..., the need for and valuing of family..., and finally dreams – dreams that fill our minds and our hearts – with possibility and with hope. It is against this concept of balance and wholeness that the problems associated with drug abuse must be considered.

We carry out our fundamental beliefs in four ways – responsible behavior; concern for others; a push to develop intellectual/ethical/and spiritual values and finally; we strive to acquire skills that can help others. Only by working together in the context of an extended community are we able to transform ourselves into unified action.

We restate our commitment to the work of restoring the wholeness of the persons we treat and through this, to improving the social well-being of the communities in which we operate. It is fitting, then, that we concentrate our efforts in understanding the pressing issues that confront us and of challenging ourselves to forge solutions and by remaining vigilant. So in the next four days, please question, seek answers – make new friends and spend time with old friends. Thank you for being here.

###