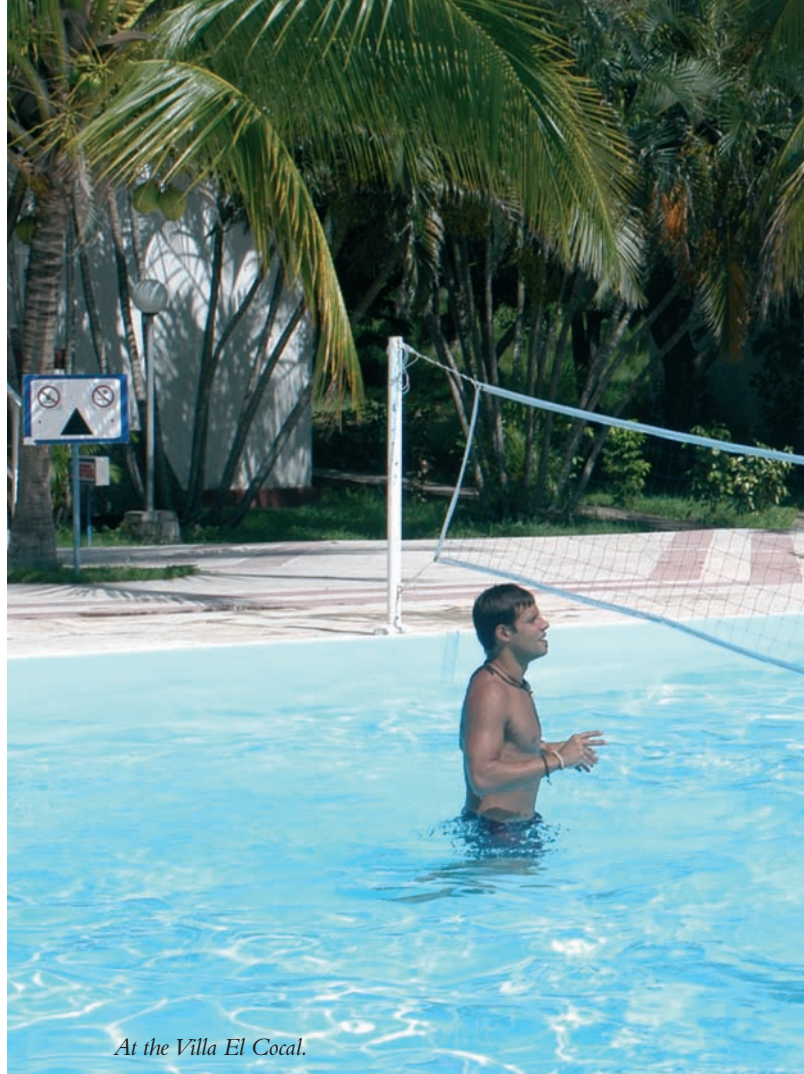


Cuban Medical Advances

Beating Addiction

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Photos: Prensa Latina and Cubanacán
Tourism & Health

Persons can be victimized by their addictions but with professional help, they can escape the dark place they find themselves in.



At the Villa El Cocal.



Among the multiple programs offered by the company Cubanacán Tourism and Health are those to treat addictions. Several centres provide services for the rehabilitation of patients with alcohol, psychoactive, and drug addictions.

With more than 15 years of experience, these institutions provide professional and specialized care with excellent therapies and comfortable conditions for their patients and their relatives.

There are three main institutions of this type in Cuba and they are located around the eastern region of the island. **Villa El Quinqué** and **Villa El Cocal** are in the province of Holguín and **El Colibrí** is in Santiago de Cuba.

A Therapeutic Community

Those are the words which define the health care model offered in these centres explains Dr. Jorge Luis Perera Horta, head of business development at Cubanacán's Commercial Division and a psychiatric specialist. The system's aim is the complete recovery of the individual. Drug and other addictions are considered to be abnormal human behaviours that do not only affect the health of the patient. They also influence their social circumstances, their familial and work relations, and the community at large.

That is why the treatment was developed as a multi-faceted approach with the complete recovery as its ultimate goal.

This type of care utilizing a therapeutic community fosters the coexistence, exchange, and interaction between the people undergoing



treatment. This allows for the sharing of common experiences from initial drawbacks to final victories. The community approach also allows for the undertaking of several programs related to life, work, health, and social interaction, all with the close and personal attention of doctors and other therapeutic personnel.

Specialist teams made up of psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, physical education technicians, and nurses perform the orientation and treatment activities appropriate to either individuals or the groups they are working with.

The objective is to lead them to a higher quality of life free of the consumption of, or any sort of dependency on, drugs or alcohol.

Paths and Alternatives

The treatment of addictions in Cubanacán's rehab centres was developed in four working areas. They are (i) therapeutic, (ii) occupational and educational alternatives, (iii) self-governance, and (iv) health and tourism.

The minimum period of treatment is three months although the ideal rehabilitation time period can reach six months or even more.

Therapeutic attention includes clinical psychiatry and psychology professionals with all the resources for different therapies. Group therapy is also used in the form of meetings, psychotherapy with relatives, and painting and music sessions among other activities. Treatments are complemented with different techniques like acupuncture, body massages, and relaxation therapies.





The area of occupational and educational alternatives provides the patients with time to reflect on their daily lives. Meetings are held where patients can talk freely about their actions and difficulties and to allow them to analyze their attitudes. Debates are led by a specialist who gives direction and guidance to individuals to encourage more appropriate conduct. This area also fosters productive, artistic and educational activities as well as craft making.

The self-governance area delegates responsibilities within the therapeutic community. Patients can be accorded such responsibilities as group heads, physical education leaders, or in charge of social and recreational activities. This encourages a greater involvement in the decision-making, control, and development of the group.

The tourism and health area organizes excursions to public places located close to the centres such as beaches.

Admission and Completion

The first thing needed to initiate the program is the right attitude - the program must be entered into with the patient's free will, a full acceptance that they have a problem, and the desire to recover. The patient must be accompanied by a relative who has an understanding of the problem.

After that comes a preliminary evaluation of the patient, taking seven to fifteen days, performed by a multidisciplinary specialized

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Visit

www.choicemedicalservices.com
 for details of a Canadian company
 organizing treatments in Cuba.

The current fee for the rehabilitation program is CUC\$ 2,500 for the preliminary evaluation and CUC\$ 13,500 for three months of treatment.

team. This team provides an answer regarding the admission to the program.

Once approved, the patients must pass each of the treatments' stages according to the goals outlined by doctors to achieve a lifestyle change and total abstinence.

Family participation is paramount in this model of health care. Relatives participate in the meetings and activities together with the patients.

Numerous patients and their relatives, who have gone through these institutions, have organized groups in countries including Spain, Venezuela, Colombia, and Chile. This has resulted in the ongoing favourable behaviour of the patients.

Regional Alert

Numbers indicate that between 16 and 30% of teenagers in Latin America and the Caribbean have tried drugs. 71% of accidental deaths of persons between 15 and 24 years old are caused by alcohol or illegal drugs.

Among the latest and most dangerous addictions are psychoactive drugs which can endanger one's quality of life.

Data taken from the Pan American Health Organization shows that on the American continent, 10% of the population drinks alcohol in excess and 4 to 9%, mainly made up of young people, use drugs with very negative consequences to their health.