

Thomas B, Delegate Area 05 – Panel 7

“Are we cooperating with professionals effectively or can we do more?”

PRAASA Presentation 2017

My name is Thomas B, and I am an alcoholic. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole as the Panel 67 Delegate for Southern California Area 05. Now and for the next two years I will be serving as a member of the Conference Committee on Cooperation with the Professional Community - or CPC.

The CPC committee has the responsibility, among other things, of suggesting to the Conference such policies and activities as may help:

1. Further A.A.'s primary purpose of carrying the message to the sick alcoholic through sharing information about the A.A. program with those professional groups and individuals who have contact with alcoholics.
2. Further mutual understanding and cooperation between Fellowship and others concerned about the problem of alcoholism, and help for the alcoholic.

My topic today is “*Are we cooperating with professionals effectively or can we do more?*”

The answer to that question is yes ... and yes.

I stand before you today as the result of the men and women of our Fellowship who made professionals aware of A.A. as a resource to help the suffering alcoholic. 19 years ago, I was one of those: A hopeless alcoholic living a wasted, desperate shattered life. I am quite clear that Alcoholics Anonymous saved my life. And I am certain that if not for the persistent work with professionals of those A.A.s who came before me, I would be dead today. And when I realized the enormity of the gift of life that I had been given, my sponsor made clear to me that "Into Action" means we accept responsibility to pass A.A.'s message of hope and recovery onward and to make the real world contacts required to help make available to others what we ourselves have freely received.

From the very beginning, A.A.'s co-founders set us good examples of how to cooperate with nonalcoholic professionals to help alcoholics. Indeed, Bill W met Dr. Bob only after first contacting a member of the Episcopal clergy to offer his help. *CPC helps to carry the message of A.A. by providing information about Alcoholics Anonymous to those who have contact with alcoholics through their profession.* This group includes health care professionals, educators, members of the clergy, lawyers, social workers, union leaders, industrial managers, government officials, as well as those working in the field of alcoholism, to name but a very few.

So the answer to the question of whether we have been cooperating with professionals effectively, is yes. I am proof of that cooperation. Our co-founders and early members knew it was imperative to seek the means by which we might carry the message of AA to as many as possible . . . as quickly as possible . . . so that others might be spared the destruction of alcoholism.

But the answer to the question “*can we do more*” is also yes.

In AA our job is to deliver the message to the suffering alcoholic. Every generation of alcoholics who have come before us have realized that *we are all responsible for the perpetuation and growth of our AA Fellowship.*

And while no service in Alcoholics Anonymous is more prestigious or more necessary than another - there are, for example, many different ways of making coffee -- cooperating with nonalcoholic professionals is an effective way to carry the message to the sick alcoholic. But just like making coffee, if everyone thinks someone else is making the coffee, the coffee won't get made.

A lot of us seem to be waiting for the return of Bill W and Dr. Bob to do this work, but they are gone. We are it. It is up to us. We are responsible. Now it is our turn, individually and collectively.

C.P.C. work can begin when an individual A.A. reveals their membership to their doctors or drops a quiet word in the ear of a pastor, priest, mullah or rabbi that an A.A. member is available to the congregation. Some A.A. members, A.A. groups, or committees share a single issue of the Grapevine or La Viña with professionals, explaining how our meeting in print paints a picture of our Fellowship *in action* through members' stories. Groups can further participate in C.P.C., like my Wednesday Night Step Study does with UCLA medical professionals and students, by welcoming professionals and future professionals to open meetings and offering a subscription to the Grapevine or La Viña.

These professionals often meet the alcoholic in places where A.A. is not present. Through professionals, alcoholics like me may be reached who might otherwise never find the program, *or they may be reached sooner* with the help of informed non-A.A.s. A professional can be *anyone who deals with problem drinkers in the course of their work*. Many of these people encounter the suffering alcoholic, and in spite of public awareness, many of them simply don't know what to do with an alcoholic drunk.

At the Conference level, we are constantly working with suggestions from our Fellowship for improving AA Literature and other service material to provide accurate information about A.A. geared to professionals, to make that information increasingly relevant to professionals, and to aid the work of A.A. Members, Groups and Service Committees involved in contacting and cooperating with professionals.

And this year we are working on implementation of an official C.P.C. page from Alcoholics Anonymous on LinkedIn, which is a social media platform geared to professionals in which information about A.A. can be brought to tens of thousands of professionals and organizations who come in contact with alcoholics. Just as when we exhibit face to face at National conferences, on LinkedIn, information about A.A. and our services can be brought to professionals within the platforms and environments which they frequent.

But there is so much more effective work to do. So today, let us ask ourselves -- if our children and their children should live to see AA in the next century, what growth and beneficial change in Alcoholics Anonymous will they see? What lasting progress will we have made?

This is our chance to answer that call. In this work we are all part of something larger than ourselves. Our willingness to grow our Fellowship, to participate working in concert with professionals to reach alcoholics and to find new and better ways to cooperate with professionals in carrying the message of AA, making it available to all who wish to hear it, makes a difference. It really does.

We accomplish great deeds by tackling what is small in them. Each act of selfless service given in furtherance of this noble aim adds to our fund and speaks to our ultimate truth: Our success as a movement will never be a big step in the future. Success is always but a small step -- the very next step forward -- taken just now.