



UMB News

Sharing Faith-based Ideas on Treating Addiction

December 21, 2017 | By [Mary T. Phelan](#)

A rabbi, a minister, and a chaplain came together to share their insights on addressing substance abuse disorders from a spiritual perspective at the fourth Annual Interprofessional Forum on Ethics and Religion in Health Care.

Held Nov. 7 at the [University of Maryland, Baltimore \(UMB\) Southern Management Corporation Campus Center](#), this year's forum theme was "Transforming Approaches to Substance Abuse Disorders." The daylong event was presented by the Institute for Jewish Continuity; the University of Maryland schools of [medicine](#), [nursing](#), [pharmacy](#), and [social work](#); the [UMB Graduate School](#); the Maryland Health Care Ethics Committee network at the [University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law](#); and the Living Legacy Foundation of Maryland.



From left, Rabbi Shmuel Silber, Rev. Milton Emanuel Williams and Chaplain Kathi Storey.

"The University of Maryland, Baltimore has seven schools. All are related to health care," **Patricia D. Franklin, PhD, RN**, assistant professor at the University of Maryland School of Nursing (UMSON) and director of

professional education, explained to attendees. "We need teams to approach the complexity of

issues that are affecting the health and well-being of residents of the United States and people of the world. So we need to come together and discuss these issues. It's a forum because it is open to the public and it is an opportunity to discuss particular issues related to the ethics of religious dilemmas that we face in providing health care. We all need to be part of that discussion. Your voice is very important."

As the nation struggles with the devastation of an opioid epidemic, taking an interprofessional approach to the topic of transforming approaches to substance abuse disorders is essential, **Jane M. Kirschling, PhD, RN, FAAN**, dean of UMSO and UMB director of interprofessional education, said in opening remarks to attendees.

"We know that our students benefit tremendously from interprofessional education and practice," she said. "It prepares them to address complex issues through team-based approaches that bring the perspectives of multiple disciplines to bear on problem solving. Today as you address the challenges of supporting individuals with substance abuse disorders, you will do so from multiple perspectives – medical, scientific, ethical, spiritual, and religious. Through your conversations and debate, through your engagement and shared learning, you have the opportunity to move our community forward in important ways."

Rabbi Shmuel Silber of Suburban Orthodox Congregation Toras Chaim; University of Maryland Medical Center (UMMC) Chaplain Kathi Storey, MA, BCC; and Rev. Milton Emanuel Williams Jr., pastor of New Life Evangelical Baptist Church, Baltimore, and founder of the Turning Point Clinic, participated in a panel discussion titled "Religion and Spirituality's History and Dilemmas with Substance Use Disorders." It was moderated by Anika A.H. Alvanzo, MD, MS, assistant professor, Johns Hopkins School of Medicine.

One of the ways that houses of worship can be supportive of those suffering from substance abuse disorders is "first and foremost to see their parishioners in a holistic way," Storey said. "People have physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. It benefits everyone when all of that is supported so that each person can reach their full potential." Another thing that can be very helpful is when places of worship can make their facilities available to 12-step recovery groups, she said.

From a Judaic perspective, Silber said, the faith teaches that all people are inherently good.

"So when you see people who are doing things that are negative, when you see people doing things that are self-destructive, when you see a person that is going down a path that absolutely makes no sense, the person is never bad. Good people do bad things. It behooves us to try to figure out what is the cause of your pain," he said.

Today's society is one of instant gratification, Silber continued.

“We believe that it is our right to always be happy and to always be content. In Judaism, we believe that it is not our God-given right to be happy. We believe that God put us on this earth to do something meaningful. True happiness will never come from something that you pop into your mouth or inject into your veins,” Silber said. “So what can we as faith-based communities do to people who are suffering with these types of disorders? If we want people to heal, we have to empower them to the realization that they are the masters of their fate.”

Support systems are valuable and necessary, he continued, “but nothing can replace the power of sheer will. Someone can only recover if they chose to recover.”

Williams founded the drug addiction treatment center Turning Point Clinic in 1995 in what he described as a halfhearted measure to “put a feather in my cap as a minister.” But when his 28-year-old daughter was killed in 2012 due to her boyfriend’s association with drug dealers, his motivation changed.

“Well, if that didn’t put a face on drugs for me,” he said. “It became more than a feather in my cap. Now there was a personal loss, something I could not ever undo. Every day, I am working to be an agent of change. As a spiritual leader, I can’t just have my hand in this thing. I’ve got to have my heart in it if I am going to be an agent of change.”

The day also included presentations by Carlo C. DiClemente, PhD, professor, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, department of psychology; **Christopher Welsh, MD**, associate professor, University of Maryland School of Medicine, medical director of the University of Maryland Medical System Substance Abuse Consultation Service, and medical director of the UMMC Comprehensive Recovery Program; **Richard Boldt, JD**, T. Carroll Brown Professor of Law, UM Carey Law; **Bethany DiPaula, PharmD, BCPP**, associate professor, University of Maryland School of Pharmacy; **Michelle M. Tuten, PhD, MSW**, assistant professor, University of Maryland School of Social Work; **Anita J. Tarzian, PhD, RN**, program coordinator, Maryland Health Care Ethics Committee Network at UM Carey Law; and **Katherine Fornili, DNP, MPH, RN, CARN, FIAAN**, assistant professor, UMSON.

Continuing education credits were provided to nurses, social workers, pharmacists, and physicians in attendance.

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