

# NEBRASKA LICENSEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

A SERVICE OF BEST CARE EAP

## *Another Successful Recovery Story From a Nebraska Health Care Professional*

Dear Judi (NE LAP Coordinator),

I am a retired Nebraska physician with just over 5 years of abstinence from alcohol. I'm very grateful for your assistance with my recovery. A brief summary of my story and how your program helped me will follow.

In the fall of 2007, I finally admitted that my alcohol consumption had become excessive. Of course, I wasn't *really* an alcoholic, and accepted none of the blame for the problem! I rationalized drinking to the point of intoxication most nights by telling myself that working hard as a solo practitioner in a small town earned me the right to "a little reward" when I was reasonably sure that going back to the hospital was unlikely – and that 'a stiff drink or two' (OK, maybe a *few* more when out of town or off duty) would help me relax and get to sleep. I further minimized my alcoholism by telling myself that I rarely drank during the day, never hurt a patient (that I knew of) as the result of drinking, never made a spectacle of myself in public or 'earned' a DUI, was careful to avoid intoxication in front of my family, and never became belligerent while drinking. My 4-5 daily martinis were always ingested late at night at home (once everyone else was asleep) over a relatively short (1-2 hrs) time span, and didn't seem to affect my work performance the next day or produce nasty hangovers. Never mind that I felt pretty shaky in the mornings – and was often short with friends, coworkers and family – if unable to drink the night before. Never mind that I had trouble finishing necessary tasks outside the practice, experienced unexplainable mid-abdominal pain that resulted in extensive (negative) workups on several occasions over the years, and that 2 marriages failed. Never mind that my adult son had a problem with drugs and alcohol and depression – and that I could not stop drinking for more than a day or 2 on my own!

I decided to seek inpatient "counseling" at a well-known center in Minnesota, but left early after deciding that I wasn't really an alcoholic! Once home, I ended my practice and quite promptly began drinking more heavily, plus taking sedatives to induce sleep. After a 2-week binge in early 2008 – which resulted in several blackouts – family and friends confronted me and I went voluntarily to another facility for a 4-day monitored detoxification. Once that was done, I sought immediate outpatient treatment (lasting 9 months), joined AA, and have been sober without significant difficulty since 1/15/08.

I was referred to the NE LAP by a friend once in treatment. They helped me focus on the problem and gave me much-needed structure, along with support and literature – especially with regard to the effects of substance abuse in health professionals – and arranged random urine monitoring for a year to document sobriety. I called Judi monthly, submitted the required reports/documentation and finished the program in 2009.

While I remain retired now, it would be possible to reestablish a medical practice, obtain malpractice insurance and join a hospital staff in good standing because of the NE LAP, I also regained FAA permission to exercise the privileges of my private pilot certificate in 2010; largely as the result of NE LAP's report.

Thank you once again, Judi!

*If you are a licensed health or health-related service professional wanting more information about alcohol/drug abuse or addiction, please contact the NE LAP at (800) 851-2336 or (402)354-8055 or visit our web site at [www.lapne.org](http://www.lapne.org). If you would like to consult with the NE LAP, or schedule an assessment or an educational presentation, please ask for Judi Leibrock, NE LAP Coordinator or Michelle Hruska, NE LAP Counselor*

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